

Shocking figures on Walsall newborns' drug dependency

CALL TO TACKLE 'JUNKIE BABIES'

Report by Clare Butler

COUNCILLORS have expressed their shock as it was revealed that more than 100 babies have been born in Walsall addicted to drugs over the past six years.

The Freedom of Information (FOI) request revealed that 182 'junkie babies' were born with 'neonatal abstinence syndrome' across the Black Country and Shropshire – with 103 of those in Walsall.

Councillor Rose Martin, who sits on Walsall Health and Wellbeing Board, described the figures as 'shocking'.

She said: "Quite clearly we are not tackling drug problems to the best we can if these are the figures. It is pretty shocking. I feel that maybe we are not reaching out to these people so this should be put on the health and wellbeing board as we need answers."

"We need to follow best practice with other authorities and see what they are doing to tackle this."

Withdrawal

Out of the 103 Walsall babies born with neonatal abstinence syndrome – there were 23 in 2011/12, 19 in 2012/13, nine in 2013/14, 19 in 2014/15 and 18 in 2016/17.

Neonatal abstinence syndrome symptoms can last from one week up to months and withdrawal depends on the medicines or drugs – and the amounts – the baby was exposed to during pregnancy.

The illness occurs when a woman who has continued abusing substances while pregnant gives birth and the umbilical cord is cut.

The supply of drugs to the baby suddenly stops and the child shows signs of physical withdrawal. Chairman of Walsall's Health and Wellbeing Board, Councillor Ian Robertson, said that they were looking at the issue.

He added: "I think that there are about 20 cases a year, which is very sad. But we are aware of this and trying to put in some external support to get mothers out of damaging environments following birth."

Elsewhere, in Wolverhampton 27 babies were born addicted to drugs or alcohol, with a cost to the NHS of £395,000 to care for them and their symptoms.

WEDDING DAY JOY FOR BLIND VETERAN GORDON



The happy couple – Walsall blind veteran Gordon Timmins and his new wife Valerie sign the register at their wedding

LOVE will certainly be in the air on Valentine's Day for newlyweds Gordon and Valerie Timmins – who have tied the knot at the ages of 79 and 76.

Blind veteran Gordon, from Great Barr, met his new bride when they were thrown together by chance at a military charity centre in north Wales. He was taking a ceramics course at the Blind Veterans UK rehabilitation centre in Llandudno where Valerie was accompanying her friend, also a blind veteran.

Gordon remembered: "I came into the lounge one evening and the only free seat just happened to be next to Valerie. We hit it off straight away and were roaring with laugh-

ter for the entire evening. Since then we've barely spent any time apart."

After a year of dating, widower Gordon proposed to 76-year-old Valerie and the pair wed at Sandwell Register Office surrounded by friends and family in November. He has now moved to Pwllheli to live with Valerie.

Gordon was called up for National Service in 1956 and served in the Army Fire Service (AFS). He was stationed all around the UK and joined the civilian fire service when demobbed in 1958. He lost his sight later in life due to age-related macular degeneration. Widowed in 2014 he found himself battling sight loss alone.

Gordon says: "It was a really difficult time. When I lost my sight, I lost a lot of my confidence and my independence too. I honestly thought my life had ended."

Fortunately Gordon was directed to Blind Veterans UK in 2015.

He added: "The support I've received has completely turned my life around. I'm confident in myself again, I've met so many new friends and to top it off now I've found Valerie. I'm over the moon."

On their wedding day Gordon and Valerie were surprised by Valerie's brother who travelled with his wife from Brazil for the wedding.

DEVELOPMENT

Bulldozers move in at former police HQ

PLANS to demolish Walsall's former police station have been given the green light, with work set to get under way this week.

DSM Demolition will flatten the six-storey building in Green Lane on behalf of its new owners Corbally Property Investments.

It comes just two months after the historic building was bought by Corbally. But exact details on what will replace the police station are yet to be revealed.

Walsall Council's Conservative group leader Mike Bird said the demolition of the city centre landmark is the 'end of an era'.

Councillor Bird said: "Personally I don't think it lends itself to housing. My understanding is the application is coming forward for mixed use of residential and commercial. It's the end of an era for Walsall in a way because that building has been there for so long."

"It's a feature of the landscape and a building that everybody recognises. Whatever replaces it will be the key to the town."

Councillor Bird said he would rather see the site be revamped rather than simply lie derelict – and will welcome whatever replaces the police station.

Corbally acquired the building last year before lodging the application to tear it down.

Police officers were moved out of the 36,500 sq ft building in October 2016 after the station had served as the town's primary police base for 50 years.

COUNCIL

Traffic worries block 150-place nursery bid

A PLAN to open a nursery at a former Walsall warehouse has been blocked due to traffic concerns. Around 150 children would have used the nursery at the West Bromwich Street site. A request to make the move was made to the council by Small Talk Nurseries, but planners decided it was not suitable.

They said the applicant had failed to show there would be sustainable uses of transport, leading to fears of more vehicles clogging up the road. Officials also said there was insufficient parking provision at the site, which was likely to lead to an increase in on-street parking.

INSIDE

BOOKED UP FOR SADDLERS BOOST



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MP in Commons bid on speeders call



Campaign – Eddie Hughes

AN MP calling for longer sentences for killer drivers has formally applied to raise the issue in the House of Commons.

On Monday, Walsall North MP Eddie Hughes submitted an application to Parliament for a 30-minute adjournment to discuss the sentencing of people convicted for causing death by dangerous driving.

It is on the back of a campaign launched by the Chronicle and Express & Star newspapers, calling for tougher action against killer drivers, which Mr

Hughes has publicly supported. The campaign, which has a petition with almost 2,000 signatures, was set up after two people were jailed for eight years each for killing victims on the road in the Black Country.

Since the story, outrage was voiced by people including Darlaston Councillor Doug James and the families of people who have lost their lives due to dangerous drivers.

Mr Hughes said: "We need to highlight the issue to the justice department to say give this some thought and come

back to us with what you think can be done. It would be useful to get some clarity as what stance the minister would take on the subject.

"Then we will know what to do next, whether that be raising a petition on the issue to Parliament and gathering support."

A petition asking for a change in law or Government policy requires 10,000 backers to get a response from the Government, and 100,000 to warrant a debate in Parliament. To sign the petition visit www.expressandstar.com

Carillion staff in borough to lose jobs

CARILLION workers from Walsall are among 450 to lose their jobs in the latest wave of redundancies at the collapsed firm. The cuts came in the wake of almost 400 axed roles, and brings the total number of job losses to 829.

The Official Receiver's office said the latest wave involved people from Wolverhampton, Walsall, Dudley, Sandwell, Staffordshire – including South Staffordshire and Cannock Chase – as well as from Telford and Shropshire.

It is not known how many jobs have been lost among the 400 at the failed company's headquarters in Wolverhampton city centre, or those working at its training centre at The Waterfront in Brierley Hill.

The Official Receiver's spokesman said that the latest losses were among staff working on private and public contracts across the whole of the country, as well as back-office workers.

A spokesperson for the Official Receiver said: "As part of the ongoing liquidation of the Carillion group, we have reviewed additional public and private sector contracts, as well as core divisions of the business. We can confirm that we have safeguarded a further 100 jobs and these roles are linked to public sector contracts."

Rock legend joins in Cyrille tribute

ROCK legend Eric Clapton joined Baggies heroes for one final tribute to Cyrille Regis.

Albion fan Clapton was pictured alongside Brendan Batson, Ron Atkinson and other Baggies greats at the weekend. On the cover of his 1978 album 'Backless', Clapton is pictured wearing an Albion scarf.

Clapton and former Albion players attended Saturday's home game as a heartfelt tribute from fans was shown for Cyrille.

Clapton sponsored Albion's UEFA Cup tie against Galatasaray in 1978.

Chasewater date for walking group

THE Walsall Group of the Ramblers heads to Chasewater for a short walk on Saturday, four miles. The meeting point is the car park at Oak Park C. P (Lichfield Road) at 9.30am.

More information can be obtained from the Walk Leader on 01922 611714.

Meanwhile, on Sunday they are heading to Ellastone for a nine-mile circular walk. 'The Weaver Hills' is a moderate walk in the Staffordshire Moorlands.

Non-members are always welcome and can obtain more information from the walk leader on 01922 631404.

Group details are available on the website www.walsallramblers.org.uk

Vandal-hit brickworks site set for 200 homes

A FORMER brickworks and mine shaft which has since become a target for vandals could be transformed into a 207-home estate under new plans.

Countryside Properties has submitted an application to build a major scheme at Heathfield Lane West, Darlaston, to Walsall Council.

The 18-acre site, which is bordered by the Walsall Canal and Black Country New Road on its western edge, used to be home to Baggot's Bridge Brick Works in the early 1900s which later became Jubilee Brick Works and Herbert's Pork Pottery Works, by the 1930s and then more recently Wards Pottery.

Other parts of the plot were used as a landfill which was operated by Moxley Ltd from 1977. Councillor Paul Bott, who represents Darlaston South, said: "It is a very historic site but it has been vandalised and fly-tipped. We need more housing so I welcome the application with reservations."

Positive

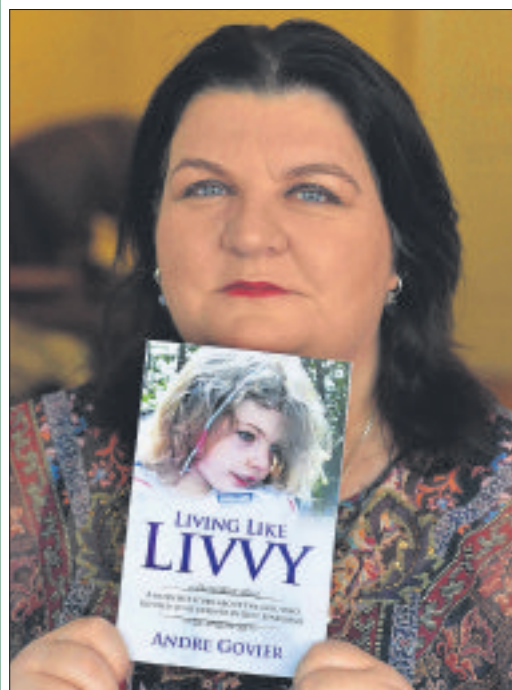
"There have been so many false dawns with this site, there has been application after application, and none have become a reality. So this application is positive we just hope they take residents views on board."

Councillor Bott added: "Residents are concerned where the traffic is going to exit the site. There is also a big issue with Wards Pool. Residents use it for fishing, it's part of the site and we want it to stay, they can't drain it."

"I would like to see a wildlife trail along the Walsall Canal and we need some play equipment for the youngsters."

A statement from Countryside Properties said: "The overall vision for the land at Heathfield Lane has evolved through a process of on-site analysis, assessment of the constraints, and discussions with Walsall Council to realise the potential of the site and meet the needs of the community."

Sara's tribute to brave daughter Olivia



Sara Meredith, with the book that has come out to raise awareness of Rett Syndrome, about her daughter Olivia who had the condition

A MOTHER whose daughter died from a rare illness has told her story to raise awareness of the disease. Sara Meredith, aged 41, from Walsall, teamed up with writer Andre Govier for the book about her daughter Olivia who died from Rett syndrome aged nine in 2008.

She described the book Living Like Livvy, which aims to raise funds for the charity Reverse Rett, as no-holds barred. Mrs Meredith said: "About a year ago I got a call from Reverse Rett and they asked me if I would mind speaking to a writer about Olivia. Andre had been fundraising for many years and he decided to use his talent to get my words down into a book so we could raise money, but also raise a lot of awareness."

"Rett syndrome is a neurological condition – if you imagine epilepsy, Parkinson's, autism and cerebral palsy all rolled into one. Olivia was born and developed normally right up until two weeks before her second birthday when she just started to scream and scream and scream."

"I had Googled all of the symptoms previously and had come across Rett syndrome. When it was raised she might have Rett syndrome it broke my heart. We had to make a decision as a family and we decided to make the most of every day. It was family picnics, spending time at the park, all the things that everyone said Olivia could not do she pretty much did. She did ice skating, she did rock climbing and canoeing – we just made the most of it."

Olivia has four surviving siblings.

The book, which sold more than 100 copies in its first week, is available on Amazon for £10.75 in paperback or £7.01 on Kindle. All royalties earned are going to the Reverse Rett charity.

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Town pub dominoes team wins UK contest

A TENSE game of dominoes ended in celebration when a Darlaston pub's team took the trophy at a national competition.

The final of the Marston's National Domino 2018 competition took place last week at the Clarendon Hotel in Wolverhampton.

A total of 45 teams signed up to play in May last year when it began, but one by one they were knocked out until only two remained.

Organiser Steve Castle has been running the games for 24 years, and said the 2018 contest was as excellent as ever.

He said: "It's a national competition and we have teams coming from all over the country."

Winner

"It was a great occasion on the night and every game was closely fought. The result was in doubt right up until midnight when the game ended."

The winner this year was the Horse & Jockey pub in Darlaston, whose players beat the Noah's Ark in Tipton to win the grand prize of £1,000.

Steve added: "They looked quite pleased to win - delighted."

The National Domino competition is open to all managed and tenanted pubs and sees teams play knock-out rounds of the traditional table game of dominoes.

In third place was Buck Inn, Newtown and fourth place went to Anchor at Burbage.

Bus services are saved by Central

TWO under-threat bus services have been saved after a new operator has come in to run them.

Arriva Midlands announced they were to cancel the 35 service, travelling to Lichfield, Aldridge and Walsall, and the 35A serving Leighwood, Druids Heath, Aldridge and Walsall.

But Central Buses has confirmed it will be operating the routes from Saturday.

Andy Cook, head operations, said: "We're pleased to step in to provide a regular bus service between Lichfield, Aldridge, Rushall and Walsall following the decision by Arriva Midlands to withdraw services 35 and 35A."

"Together Central Buses services 35 and 35A will provide buses up to every 30 minutes daytime Monday to Saturday between Aldridge, Rushall and Walsall and up to every 60 minutes between Lichfield, Aldridge and Walsall."

"This is a great time to be moving up a gear - get on board."

"It's much less fuss to travel by bus."

Death led to huge outpouring of grief



James Brindley

JAMES Brindley's death prompted one of the biggest outpourings of grief the West Midlands has seen in years.

More than 700 people donated to a crowdfunding website to help pay for his funeral, while family, friends and former teachers paid loving tributes to him. His parents, who raced to his side on June 23 after being alerted of the stabbing by his girlfriend, referred to their 'most precious' son.

In a heartbreaking statement 10 days later, company director Mark Brindley, aged 57, his wife Beverley, 55, and their daughter Charlotte, thanked passers-by and paramedics who tried to save him.

They went on: "When they had done everything humanly possible, we were able to go to him and tell him how much we love him. But it wasn't possible for us to hold him in our arms as his life passed away, or for him to know that his family was with him. We felt guilty seeing the sun rise on that next morning, and have every morning since."

Thomas Stopford raised almost £16,000 after setting up a crowdfunding page - with more than half donated in the first two days. He described his friend as 'the kindest, most thoughtful, genuine and honourable young man'.

Mr Stopford added: "No person can replace the warming presence he carried with him. When he entered a room he was guaranteed to make someone laugh. He had such a love for life, for his family and his friends. No words can express the kind of person Jim was, and the impact he had on those around him."

"He was always the person to inspire you to chase your dreams, or to help out a friend or stranger in need."

Part-time gym instructor Mr Brindley, who had been about to launch a health and fitness business before he was stabbed, had attended Aldridge School.

Teenage killer of fitness instructor given 17 years

A TEENAGE killer who murdered fitness instructor James Brindley by stabbing him on his way home from a night out has been sentenced to at least 17 years behind bars.

Judge Patrick Thomas QC told Ammar Kahrod, a 17-year-old student, he was responsible for the death of a 'totally innocent and unsuspecting young man' who died because Kahrod was carrying a knife.

Reporting restrictions were lifted allowing the naming of Kahrod, of Walsall, Road, Aldridge, who has enjoyed anonymity during the two-week trial due to his age.

He was convicted of the murder of Mr Brindley by a unanimous verdict and given a life sentence, with a minimum term of 17 years. His brother, Aaron Kahrod, 21, of the same address, was acquitted.

Budding businessman James Brindley was on his way home on June 23 last year after meeting friends in Aldridge when he was attacked.

The popular 26-year-old, who had drank only water at the pub, left to take a call from his girlfriend and decided to return home.

Aggressor

He was still on the phone at 11.42pm when he encountered the Kahrod brothers in Little Aston Road, at the entrance to The Croft park.

Ammar Kahrod claimed Mr Brindley was the aggressor but the judge rejected his claim, accusing him of lying throughout the trial. Four schoolboys saw him back away from the confrontation, holding his arm up to try and calm the situation.

But in the 35-second gap before calling his girlfriend back, Mr Brindley was stabbed so forcefully that the knife passed through his breast bone before piercing his heart.

His attackers fled the scene while Mr Brindley ran back to the High Street before collapsing. His sister Charlotte, 22, and father Mark spoke movingly to the court about the impact of his death and of not being beside him in his final moments as medics performed open heart surgery in the street, calling 'we love you James' from behind the police tape.

Charlotte said she was 'tormented on a daily basis' that she could not do anything to help her beloved brother in his final moments.



Ammar Kahrod, aged 17, jailed for life

Describing him as her 'best friend, confidant and motivator', she said what should have been an exciting time in her final year at university was now 'excruciating' but she was seeing it through because her brother would have wanted it.

She spoke of the wider effect of losing him had had on the Aldridge community 'both young and old' and, at closer quarters, of the struggle to cope of a 12-year-old cousin who had missed time off school due to his grief.

Company director Mark Brindley, 57, said: "James' life has been taken from him in the most calculated, cold-hearted and cowardly manner, and at no point have the defendants shown any humility or remorse whatsoever."

"This callousness is beyond our comprehension."



Fitness instructor James Brindley, the victim

"We are serving our own life sentence from which there is no release."

Sentencing him, Judge Thomas said: "This is a terrible tale, and all because a young man chose to carry a knife."

The court, police and public were 'deeply concerned' at the growing trend among young men and boys for carrying knives, he said.

He told Kahrod he came from a strong and loving family and did not have the excuse of being ill-treated as he grew up and in fact had a promising future.

Judge Thomas told him: "Your level of maturity does not match your intelligence. That may go some way to explain but of course does not begin to excuse what you did that night."

NEWS IN BRIEF

Work to resume at old quarry

PROPOSALS to bring an unused quarry back into operation have been approved, paving the way for 120,000 tons of sand to be extracted every year.

Banton Hill Quarry in Aldridge had once been the bane of residents' lives on Banton Hill Lane.

They had even taken to the streets to block HGVs getting past during a demonstration they held in 2008 in protest against the dust and mud caused by lorries. But now long-term plans to reopen it have been passed, the HGVs will enter and exit the site from a new access on Chester Road instead.

MP wants to hear business views

A TORY MP has urged business leaders to join her for her annual business breakfast in March. Wendy Morton is hosting the event in the wake of new economic figures which she says are proof that the Government is 'building a Britain fit for the future'.

She hailed official figures released last week that show unemployment at a 40-year low in the UK, and standing at two per cent in her Aldridge-Brownhills constituency.

The event takes place on March 9. For details email wendy.morton.mp@parliament.uk or call 01922 452228.

Opticians help raise £35,000

OPTICIANS across the Black Country have helped raise thousands for people in need.

Scrivens Opticians & Hearing Care gathered £35,000 for its charity of the year Alzheimer's Society.

Staff from branches across the region, including Wolverhampton, Bilston, Willenhall, Oldbury and Aldridge, raised the cash over the past 12 months.

Fundraising activities included cake and book sales, fancy dress events, charity calendar, children's competition and tea parties.

'Innovative' micro pub to go ahead

A MICRO pub has been given the green light by councillors. The 'innovative' establishment will be located at High Street in Brownhills, at the junction with Lichfield Road and will be open from 10am until just before midnight.

Members of the public initially expressed concern that the length of the opening hours would cause anti-social behaviour but West Midlands have requested that CCTV be installed.

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£10,000 boost for RBL appeal

SHOPPERS at Sainsbury's have raised £10,000 for The Royal British Legion's (RBL) Poppy Appeal. The amount raised by customers at the Oldbury store in October and November helped raise the UK's 2017 total to more than £3 million.

Katy Bradshaw-Sole, store manager at Sainsbury's Oldbury, said: "Our community always get behind the Poppy Appeal and each year our customers and colleagues continue to dig deep for the charity."

"We are thrilled to have raised such a huge amount for the Royal British Legion and look forward to seeing what the future holds."

Number of falls at hospitals reduced

THERE has been a 30 per cent reduction in falls at Black Country hospitals. The Safety Plan, which was introduced at Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust in January last year, involves clinical staff completing 10 safety checks when assessing a patient.

Statistics show the number of falls resulting in an injury has decreased by 30 per cent a week as a result of the plan being implemented across the trust. Figures also show 99 per cent of patients are receiving all 10 checks within 24 hours following admission.

Chief Nurse Elaine Newell said: "This is all about our patients."

Airport trials aid for blind in toilet

BIRMINGHAM Airport has become the first in the UK to fit the revolutionary RoomMate, an audio description unit for the visually impaired, in one of its disabled access toilets.

It provides an audio description of the facility for blind and visually impaired users.

Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM) Manager, Ed Kibblewhite said: "We have since invited several groups to trial the RoomMate with us and look forward to their feedback."

Extra day a week at legion's Break Away

A LUNCH and social activity club for older people is opening an extra day each week - Friday - from March 1.

Break Away, at the Royal British Legion, Summerhill, Kingswinford, is currently open on Mondays and Thursdays between 9am and 4pm.

Anyone interested is welcome to pop in and have a chat or can get further information by contacting Jenny Bates on 07487 404882.

Pitch in to get healthy with Man v Fat

A FOOTBALL scheme aimed at helping men tackle their weight issues, has added another league in Walsall to meet growing demand.

Man v Fat Football, is a successful weight loss scheme which has previously seen 95 per cent of players lose weight, over the course of its 14-week duration - officially endorsed by the Football Association, Sport England and football clubs across the country.

Man v Fat combines the beautiful game with easy to follow dietary and lifestyle advice as well as online and offline support. Before each game, a weigh-in takes place followed by a 30 minute six-a-side football match.

Players can earn extra goal bonuses for their team depending on the number of pounds lost, putting the emphasis on teamwork. The final result of each match consists of the score

on the pitch and the score from the scales.

Andy Dyke, for the FA said: "Football doesn't begin and end with the professional game, there are different levels and styles of football played throughout the UK. Man v Fat Football is a brilliant initiative

"You might be thinking that your footballing days are behind you, but Man v Fat Football is a great bridge

back into the national game." Man v Fat Football Walsall launches at the Bescot Stadium on February 16 and runs every week for the following 14 weeks. It is free to play - with a £10 refundable deposit, so the only thing you have to lose is weight...

Players can join at www.manvfatfootball.org/bescot and get more information by emailing football@manvfat.com

Council 'must come clean on centre deal'

Report by Peter Madeley

AN MP has accused Walsall council of withholding crucial information from the public over the authority's controversial deal to buy a shopping centre.

Walsall Council bosses signed off on the £13.8 million purchase of the Saddlers Centre last year, despite closing nine libraries and shedding hundreds of jobs in cost-cutting measures.

The Labour authority says it hopes the deal will help turn around its financial woes and net it more than £10m in five years.

But Walsall North's Tory MP Eddie Hughes, who is also a councillor for Streetly, has accused bosses of failing to adequately explain to the public how they expect the centre to turn a profit.

His demand for details, submitted through a Freedom of Information request, was turned down on the grounds that it was not in the public interest.

A furious Mr Hughes said: "At a time when people are deciding whether or not buying the centre is a good idea, the council is intent on withholding information. They should be able to make a case explaining why this was a good investment, rather than coming up with reasons for holding the information back."

In his FOI request, Mr Hughes asked for papers relating to private discussions that took place before the deal was agreed. The council refused the request on the grounds that 'the public interest in withholding the information outweighs the public interest in disclosing it'.

Lead assurance officer James Sparrock said releasing details of meetings held in private would 'set a precedent where discussions such as these could be viewed as disclosable to the public domain'.

Extra £23.7m needed for Civic Halls work



The improvements will include new balconies, new bar and hospitality areas, lifts and better access

AN extra £23.7 million has been signed off to complete the botched Civic Halls revamp. Councillors have given the go-ahead for the extra cash needed to complete the project before it reopens in two years time.

It means £38.1m will now be spent on refurbishing the Civic Hall and Wulfrun Hall - despite council bosses initially setting aside just £14.4m. The authority says it will fund the extra investment by selling off land and buildings, as well as applying for grants.

However, major shows by stars such as Jason Manford and Sarah Millican won't now go ahead at the venue.

Councillor John Reynolds said extra money was needed for the project to 'secure the future for generations to come'. The cabinet member for city economy said: "Clearly with a figure like this, it's not something we have taken light-heartedly."

"An independent contractor confirmed the figure we are talking about here is approved for some projects nationwide. So, we know that these costs are as accurate as they possibly can be. It's a much-loved building. It's a building that is not just loved locally."

The Civic Halls revamp - which will see extra seating across new balconies, improved and new bar and hospitality areas, ventilation, lifts and better access to the Wulfrun Hall - was originally due to cost £14.4 million.

But early 'opening-up' works revealed the budget was not large enough for the scope of work, with 'significant structural changes' needed and removal of asbestos.

Council bosses said the extra £23.7 million would come mainly from selling off land and buildings, with a 'strong potential to secure external grants and funding from regional and national bodies'.

Severn Trent water bills are lowest despite rise

SEVERN Trent customers in West Midlands will enjoy the lowest average combined bills in Britain for the eighth year in a row.

The company, which has also reduced sewer flooding by half in the past year, has confirmed that its bills for the coming 12 months will continue to be less than £1 a day, at a time when it is also investing billions of pounds in its water and waste network.

The 3.3 per cent rise in the bill for clean and waste water services, agreed after negotiations with Ofwat, will mean an average of £348 for the 4.3 million customers and eight million people served by the water company.

Nationally the average combined bill is £405.

Liv Garfield, Severn Trent's chief executive, said: "We're delighted that our customers will continue to enjoy the lowest average bills in the land."

"Our absolute priority is to improve our services for all of our customers in those areas that matter most to them, while also helping those people who are least able to afford our services."

"That's why it's so lovely to see that, alongside our service improvements, we've also beaten our target of helping 50,000 of our vulnerable customers with their bills."

As well as reducing sewer flooding, the company has also seen a 12 per cent reduction in water quality complaints, and has invested £324 million across the region in the last six months alone. One of the biggest projects the water supplier is currently investing in are the £300m Birmingham Resilience Project to provide the city with an alternative water supply.

Police warning on van security

A THIRD Ford Transit van has been stolen in the Walsall area with police warning about a spike in 'keyless' thefts.

The latest incident took place at an address on Alexandra Road, Palfrey, between 9.30pm last Wednesday and 4.40am Thursday.

It follows two Transit thefts overnight between Monday night and Tuesday morning, one on Birmingham Road and another on Allens Road. In both cases keys were not needed to gain access.

Kevin Pitt, police, engagement and consultation officer, said: "One of the most effective ways to stop someone stealing your vehicle is to use a wheel lock. That way even if thieves manage to open your car door they won't be able to drive your vehicle away."

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Christmas crackdown by officers nets drivers

HUNDREDS of suspected drink and drug drivers were caught during the Christmas period, as police cracked down hard on “reckless” motorists putting lives at risk.

Officers from West Midlands Police and the Central Motorway Police Group arrested 251 drivers for being over the alcohol limit through December, and 40 for being under the influence of drugs.

The highest alcohol recording was 184 micrograms in 100 millilitres of breath – more than five times the legal limit.

West Midlands PCC David Jamieson said: “People driving under the influence of drink or drugs are a menace on our roads. They put their own and other people’s lives at risk.

“Drinking alcohol then driving is the most dangerous thing a driver can do. I’ve seen first-hand the damage drink and drug driving can have, that is why I’m pleased that in the latest campaign nearly 300 reckless drivers were caught.

“The overwhelming majority of law-abiding motorists are appalled at drink driving and will backing the action taken against a small minority to make our roads safer.”

Inspector Jack Boardman, who led operation, said: “It is completely unacceptable to get behind the wheel while under the influence of drink or drugs.”

Taylor made for entertainment

DARTS legend Phil Taylor is coming to Walsall Football Club later this year, it has been announced.

The Power will be at the Banks’s, The Venue, on Friday, October 5, for an ‘Evening with...’ show. The 57-year-old bowed out of darts earlier this year on the back of his defeat in the PDC World Championship final.

He retired as the most successful player after racking up 16 World Championships, 16 World Matchplay wins and 11 World Grand Prix titles.

Taylor, from Stoke, won his first World Championship in 1990 defeating his mentor Eric Bristow in the final.

Tickets cost £60 per person and include a three-course meal.

Visit www.eticketing.co.uk to book.

Balcony threat

A MAN who threatened to jump from a fourth-floor balcony in Caldmore was talked down by police. A spokesman said: “Trust and confidence was built and the male was detained and is now receiving medical treatment.”

Sunnyside Farm homes plan green light



The site as it looks at the moment

NEW life will be breathed into an ‘eyesore’ site at the expense of businesses based there that will be forced to relocate.

Walsall Council’s planning committee has rubber stamped the plans for 63 houses to be built at Sunnyside Farm in Walsall Wood, which was referred to as ‘neither sunny nor a farm’, after agreeing that the plans would improve the area.

But businesses which have been based on the site on Northgate for years have now been thrown into doubt about their futures because

they will have to move. One owner, who has ran the lorry firm Universal Exports there for 20 years, had previously said he has been looking for places to move to for 18 months without any luck and may have to sell.

Another business owner, Steve Morris, who owns a car dealership, has been forced into early retirement.

Councillor Keith Sears said: “It is encroachment on the green belt which is against council policy and I am concerned for the people with local businesses and jobs. Plus it is over intensification of the area. There

will be too many properties on such a small plot of land.”

Councillor Mike Bird: “It is neither sunny nor a farm. It is an eyesore that has been there for 50 years. We need to look at Northgate though. It is a nightmare turning onto it.”

Concerns were raised about access to the site and the amount of traffic it will cause on the B4152 Northgate. Councillors discussed the possibility of introducing a speed limit. The development will be made up of 18 affordable dwellings and 45 private dwellings with car parking.

Probe on patient’s death highlights care failings

Saddlers boost Isabella hopes



Isabella Lyttle, 10, signing and selling books with Walsall FC’s Swifty and players Jordan Sangha, Liam Kinsella and Luke Leahy along with Walsall Mayor Councillor Marco Longhi

GENEROUS shoppers and football stars dropped in at a Walsall supermarket to back a fundraising campaign for a 10-year-old girl.

Isabella Lyttle’s family have launched the fundraiser to pay for treatment in New York for neuroblastoma.

A collection day was held at Tesco Extra in the town in aid of Isabella, with Saddlers stars Jordan Sangha, Liam Kinsella and Luke Leahy attending. Isabella is battling cancer for the fourth time and her family needs to raise £155,000 for her treatment for rare cancer – and have almost reached halfway. A day of bucket collections was held at the supermarket

in Littleton Street West on Saturday. Walsall community champion Leah Taylor said: “It was amazing – we had a brilliant day.”

“We had a lot of children come from Birmingham Children’s Hospital who have been following Isabella’s story.

Isabella is due to head to London for radioactive therapy, which it is hoped will free her of the cancer. She will then undergo a clinical trial in Southampton before going to New York for the potentially lifesaving treatment.

Donate to Isabella’s campaign at justgiving.com/campaigns/charity/solvingkidscancer/isabellalyttle

AN independent probe into the care of a vulnerable elderly patient at Walsall Manor Hospital has highlighted a number of failings.

Susan Hearsey’s family claimed her final weeks were ruined by her stay there between July 28 and September 16, 2013.

The 63-year-old, who had learning difficulties, told them a nurse on Ward 14 had deliberately damaged her doll ‘Rachel’, which she treated like her own child.

The doll’s arm was cut, its hair pulled out, eyelashes trimmed and her legs damaged. There were further allegations that Miss Hearsey suffered degrading treatment.

Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust, which runs the hospital, investigated the case internally and later reached an out-of-court compensation settlement worth £65,000 with the family in March 2015.

But in the last 12 months NHS investigators Verita have carried out an independent review and found a number of shortcomings around the care of Miss Hearsey, who has since died.

The probe was commissioned by the trust last year. A report of its findings said ‘reasonable adjustments’ were not made for her in light of her learning difficulties and that hospital staff did not seek help or advice from experts, or her family.

It also found that Miss Hearsey’s family were ‘inadequately involved’ by staff stating their input would have likely resulted in an ‘improved experience’ for



Patient – Susan Hearsey

her. The report added: “We found little evidence in the nursing notes of staff treating Miss H with appropriate empathy and compassion.”

Verita then focused on claims that Miss Hearsey’s doll was deliberately damaged by a nurse, who was initially suspended over the matter. But they reached the same conclusion as the trust, stating: “There was, and still is, not enough evidence to support this allegation.”

Verita listed more than a dozen recommendations to the trust, including measures around dealing with patients with learning difficulties, but they noted that improvements had already been made since Miss Hearsey’s stay.

No-one at the trust was available to comment.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Suspected slave at drug factory

A SUSPECTED slavery victim was recovered as police raided a huge drugs factory. Police swooped on a property above a former shop on High Street, Brownhills. A Vietnamese man was taken away from the property along with 88 cannabis plants which were seized.

An eye-witness to the scenes, who did not wish to be named, said the property searched was above the former YRS Wines and Beers which has been closed for seven years.

A police spokesman said that the man was ‘of Vietnamese origin’ and the raid took place just before 3pm on Saturday January 27.

Firm customers backing service

A SURVEY by Tipton and Coseley Building Society has found 99 per cent of members rate its service as great or very good. The Tipton’s 2017 annual branch customer service survey has replies from 550 members.

Also 99 per cent of those who responded also said they would be likely or very likely to recommend the society to a friend – up from 98.9 per cent in 2016 and 98.3 per cent in 2015. Richard Newton, the Tipton’s chief executive, said: “I couldn’t be happier to receive such positive feedback from our members whose opinions and

Van and tipper truck are stolen

A VAN and a tipper truck were stolen from different areas of Walsall in the same night. Both incidents took place between last Monday night and Tuesday morning.

A white Ford Transit tipper was stolen from an address in Birmingham Road. It is not known how the culprit gained access to the vehicle.

While a white Ford Transit refrigeration van was driven off from Allens Road in Pelsall. Police have not stated whether the incidents are thought to be linked. Anyone with information should call the force on 101.

Don’s the one for sportsmans evening

DON Goodman will sharing tales from his football career at a fundraising event next month. The former Wolves, Walsall and Baggies star is the guest speaker at the Rotary Club of Dudley’s sportsmans evening.

The black tie event at Molineux will be compered by John Collier and will also feature comedian Bob Webb and a three course meal. It takes place on February 15 from 6.30pm. Email atwood1@btconnect.com for details.

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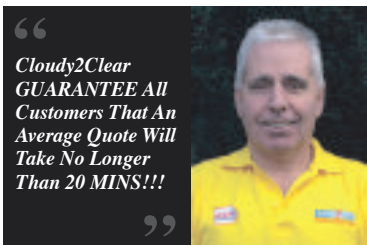
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IN MY VIEW

with Mark Andrews



It's just criminal to penalise for 31mph

IF a pollster stopped you in the street and asked about your priorities for crime and policing, what would you say?

Violent crime? Putting away more burglars? Getting tough on anti-social behaviour, vandalism, and graffiti?

Or maybe you would reply: "All of these things are important, but I understand that in these days of stretched resources you can't do everything. So what I would really like is to nick motorists for doing 31mph."

I suspect the latter represents something of a minority viewpoint. But last week, just days after recording a 13 per cent rise in overall crime, and a 16 per cent increase in violent crime, the chief constable of West Mercia Police decided the burning issue was petty speeding offences.

Actually I suspect he knows full well that is not the view of the public. But there seems to be a culture among the higher echelons of most of our public services these days that their role is not to implement the will of the people, but to "change our attitudes and perceptions."

If we think burglary or yobbish behaviour is more important than straying fractionally over the speed limit, then we are clearly in need of a bit of education. Worked a treat in the old Eastern bloc.

Indeed, Mr Bangham says he wants to create a climate where the public feels embarrassed rather than aggrieved when being hit with a speeding fine, and up to a point I agree. But I think this approach will do exactly the opposite.

Think about how different attitudes to speeding were 30 or so years ago. Learner drivers were told it was ok to do up to 35mph "to keep up with the traffic", and police usually allowed people a margin of 10mph before stopping them.

But the thing was back then, if you did get caught, it really did mark you down as a bit of an idiot. Everyone knew you were driving irresponsibly and deserved all you got.

If we start penalising every single driver who strays one mph over the limit – which is basically every single driver – that stigma is gone. It becomes nothing more than a lottery, putting the self-centred boy racer in the same bracket as the little old lady on her way to a whist drive.

Mr Bangham has now sought to "clarify" the recent comments, and assures us officers will not be targeting drivers for trivial speeding infringements after all. Good.

Because if everyone is liable to be done for speeding, where's the embarrassment in that?

Getting in a state over a visit from US President



Stephen Fry – how much of this anger is genuinely about Trump



Donald Trump – how many demonstrators would turn out anytime to bash America



Lord Adonis – sneering at entire city and dancing on grave of a stricken company?

Playing Trump card – or just snobbery?

STEPHEN Fry is leading the campaign for "the most incredible protest in history" when Donald Trump makes his state visit to Britain. But how much of this anger is genuinely about Trump and how much is simply the latest manifestation of the anti-Americanism which has been festering in British society ever since we lost the War of Independence 235 years ago? It is a sneering snobbery, based on the conviction that European nations are civilised, wise and cultured while America is vulgar, brash and far too powerful. At its heart it is all about old nations envying the success of a new nation. And I wonder how many of the "anti-Trump" demonstrators would turn out at any opportunity to bash America, no matter who was the president. One of our national treasures said in an interview 10 years ago: "When they mock America for its supposed lack of knowledge, irony or sophistication, they are revealing nothing but the pathetic inadequacy and inferiority complex of the British. I absolutely hate that sneering anti-Americanism." The national treasure? Stephen Fry, since you ask.

A READER asks why it is that the latest cooking fad, Himalayan salt crystals, have lain "undisturbed beneath the mountains for one hundred million years" but come with a "best before" date of December 2018.

ONE or two old softies took me to task for suggesting serial burglars should be taken into a field and shot. I wonder whether this week's report on the armed raider known as the Night Watcher who is targeting homes in southern England, terrifying householders and stealing their valuables changes any minds. Simple question: would the world be a better or a worse place if Chummie was no longer with us? Anyway, if he really is a soldier he'll understand

THE BEST OF PETER RHODES



the concept of the firing squad.

MY RECENT item on sneering at Americans reminds me of a pal who has recently had facial surgery and complains that, because of the stitches, he can no longer sneer with both sides of his mouth. My research suggests that he probably never could. Try it. Curl your lip into the sneeriest sneer you can manage and then try it with the other side of your mouth. It seems most people are one-sided sneerers. The explanation may be that, once you start sneering in childhood, you choose one side and the muscles on the other side "forget" how to curl. I dare say there are ambidextrous sneerers but I have yet to meet one.

I WROTE recently about how a friend and I had different memories of the same event, a trip to the North Pole. A reader is reminded of his amazement in discovering that he had been at the same 1980s David Bowie concert in Milton Keynes as a lifelong friend. It turned out they both remembered the heat, the expensive bottled water and the four-hour delay in leaving the car park. But both had forgotten a significant fact. My reader went home and related the amazing coincidence to his wife who replied with a mixture of bemusement and pity: "Yes, I drove us all down in the car."

DID you spot the symbol the stars wore at the Grammys to show their solidarity with the campaign against sexual harassment? It was a

white rose which also happens to be the symbol of Britain's right-on capital of liberal, gender-neutral and progressive thinking. Yorkshire. Put that kettle on, luv.

YOU may be aware that Lord Adonis, unaccountable architect of the detested HS2 and unelected crusader to overturn Brexit, is not one of my favourite people. He reinforces that status with his infamous recent tweet: "Wolverhampton, political base of Enoch Powell in the 60s and a huge Leave majority, is HQ to just one large company, Carillion!" Strange man. He seems to be sneering at an entire city while simultaneously snarling at Brexiters and dancing on the grave of a stricken company. They ought to put him in a circus for crotchety old people. But then that's exactly where he is.

I AM coping with this new online spell-check but it does make some odd connections. Who, in the name of sanity, thinks when I type "someone's" I may have intended to type "Simeon's"?

YOU have to admire the brass neck of Thomas Cook in blatantly turning sunbeds from a holiday entitlement into a paid-for extra. We were presumably supposed to cheer the travel firm's introduction of guaranteed, pre-hired sunbeds at holiday resorts. 'The end of the battle for the sunbed' crowed one headline. But at £22 a time? It is outrageous. How long before they start charging you for a seat in the dining room?

AFTER the death of Ikea founder Ingvar Kamprad was announced, I received a flurry of emails from folk joking that he ought to be buried in a flat-pack coffin. Maybe I'm getting old but it struck me as in rather poor taste.

TALKING POINT



No honey, I'm just being nice – not sexist

"THAT'S £3.50 please sweetheart."

"Thanks love, have a good day."

That could be a scene from any retail outlet at any time of the day. Yet how far can we go with pleasantries?

I ask, because walking through the centre of Wolverhampton, I encountered a hand-written notice. "A word of kindness can make someone's day."

The sentiment I wholeheartedly agree with, but not everyone may take your compliments the right way.

One rail commuter took to Twitter to express her disgust over what she called rude and misogynistic behaviour by a rail company official who had the cheek to address her as 'honey.'

Feeling patronised, she condemned the alleged put-down as 'everyday sexism'.

The company's reply – instead of an explanation or apology, she was asked if she'd prefer to be called 'pet' or 'love' next time – was probably ill-advised, but this only serves to act as a warning to others who may be easily offended by terms of endearment.

The company did apologise for what it had intended to be a light-hearted response and, while I do believe the commuter had a genuine complaint to make about the level of service, I personally think she should get a grip.

In an age when we are told that chivalry is dead, I wonder whether the same woman would complain if a 'gentleman' let her on or off the train first or held the door open for her.

From my own point of view, I have no problem with anyone I am dealing with calling me 'sweetheart', for example, they are only being polite after all. I wouldn't express the same platitudes in return as affectionate terms are only reserved for my other half. But their words will be appreciated and I will always be civil – I think please and thank you should be key words in everyone's vocabulary.

However, and this brings me back to the sign in Wolverhampton, who's to say no-one would be offended if I did call someone 'darling' for instance?

As a bloke dishing out niceties to a woman there's always the possibility that your intentions could be misread. If I tell someone their hair looks good that day or their outfit suits them, I would expect most right-minded people to take that as it is, a compliment.

We all like to be told something good about ourselves and I think one ought to tell, during face-to-face interaction at least, whether someone is being sincere or sinister. It's sad that some people can't always see it that way.

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Redressing the balance after top care

FAR too often you hear complaints regarding the NHS in our area. I would like to redress the balance. In June this year following my wellman check at my doctors, I was found to have a PSA reading for prostate cancer of 22!

I had had no symptoms that there was anything wrong. Within a week I had seen the urology specialist at the Manor Hospital. Within a further two weeks I had both MRI and bone

scans, again at the Manor, followed by a biopsy which confirmed prostate cancer. On August 21 I had my prostate removed at Heartlands Hospital. From the initial PSA test to surgery was just 10 weeks, amazing. I was given the all-clear on November 16. I am one of the lucky ones. If it was not for my doctor, Dr Wust, at Lichfield Street Surgery, Walsall, I would have been walking about with cancer

spreading throughout my body. The levels of care, support, skill and professionalism I received from my doctors, the Manor and Heartlands Hospital were exceptional, which undoubtedly saved my life. Thank you all so much. You men out there over 40, get yourselves a PSA test every 12 months, as I said, I didn't know I had cancer!

TERRY BATE
Walsall

Passport colour not the issue

ALAN T Harrison comes up with usual platitudes (letters, January 15) forwarded by the Remain camp.

He makes two points, the first about passport colour. I can assure him that the last concern Leave voters thought about when appending their cross on the vote was this.

Secondly, regarding opportunity limitation for the young, this is mere speculation. Young people travelled and worked abroad before the United States of Europe and will no doubt do so again.

No-one yet knows the final resolution of the negotiations, all is conjecture.

Just as was the belief that our world would collapse if we voted to leave, and yet the stock market has recently recorded its highest result for many years and employment is up.

It really is time that remain camp put their continual carping aside and backed the negotiators to try and ensure an equitable outcome for all the British people.

JOHN D CHAMBERLAIN
Great Barr

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POST

Walsall Chronicle,
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Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

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story, write to The Editor, Chronicles, 51-53 Queen Street, Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

Time to stop plugging these electric vehicles

THE recent news item about the Government suggesting electric cars are the answer would be laughable if it was not so tragic. Personally I do not believe all the hype about global warming, the climate of this planet has always changed.

In the 1700s there was a mini ice age which caused food shortages. Of course there is more CO2 and the world population is greater than it has ever been, but no-one suggests cutting the global population.

Manufacturing everything in Asia and then ship-

ping it across the world adds to the global pollution but the economists tell us not to worry as it is cheap.

Wasteful HS2 will see all the meaningful jobs moved to London, along with the destruction of thousands of acres of countryside. Mass use of electric battery vehicles would pose a massive problem, they are impractical for long distance. Recently it was claimed they could now do 100 miles on a single charge. Hardly practical if travelling to Scotland.

MR M FAWDREY
Hednesford

Don't judge a book by title

HOW the Star's examples of wrong book titles made me laugh. But ruin a book - no! Opens up new opportunities for future books. 'Murder at the Tesco Express' speaks for itself.

'The Joy of Socks' - a heart warming story of a man obsessed by socks, will it prevent him from finding true love? Harry Potter and the Chamber of Commerce - an adult Harry uses his magic as CEO of a Black Country company. Shame it wasn't Carillion.

JANE LESLEY WILLIAMS
Walsall

Plastics flow down rivers

I READ with interest, the letter from Mr Bob Whitehouse, E&S January 17, concerning the problem of plastics in our oceans. Mr Whitehouse asks how plastics from our area can find its way to the sea.

As a river angler for 60 years, I can say, it is because of the amount of plastic, etc, that is thrown down the river banks, and I take no pleasure in blaming 'some' of it on anglers, but a lot of it is by the general public.

RON EMERY
Bilston

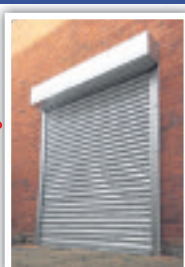
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U-turn on Jabez Cliff £8m health centre bid

DOCTORS behind controversial plans to axe four surgeries and build a new health centre have gone back to the drawing board following a public backlash.

Last year a consultation was launched to move Walsall practices Lichfield Street Surgery, Sycamore House Surgery, The Limes Surgery and Saddlers Medical Centre into a new £8m facility earmarked for the former Jabez Cliff leather works site near the town centre.

But the plan prompted huge concerns particularly surrounding parking and access to the site on Lower Forster Street.

More than 400 people who took part in the consultation – 50 per cent – formally objected to the scheme.

While doctors said they would still try to find a solution to the issues at Jabez Cliff having previously argued it was the only deliverable location, they declared they would now look at alternative sites.

It has also been revealed the old leather works has been sold to a new owner. The latest developments come as dozens of concerned patients met at The Royal Hotel last Monday to again voice their reservations.

Martin Stevens, a GP partner at three of the practices, said: "We greatly value the views of our patients and will listen to this feedback. We will reassess the proposal and try to work out a way to address these concerns."

"The Lower Forster Street site has recently been sold to new developers and we will continue to work with them to consider whether this site remains the most suitable. We still be-



Members of the public in attendance at a meeting to discuss the proposals



An artist's impression of what the proposed health centre would look like

lieve that a new modern health centre will provide greater access to services, a wider range of services and improved quality health care for our patients."

Regarding the results of the consultation, Dr Stevens added: "The most common reasons given for not supporting the proposal were concerns about parking and access to the proposed site."

Walsall Councillor Rose Martin, who represents the Paddock area, addressed residents on Monday night.

She said: "There was a good turnout and the main issues were parking and accessibility. We are not against the amalgamation but the proposal to go to Jabez Cliff will mean Paddock, Orchard Hills and the deprived area of Chuckery will have no doctors at all."

COMMERCIAL FEATURE

Funding boost for Willenhall chart group

Willenhall CHART Centre is today celebrating a £14,605.00 funding boost from SUEZ Communities Trust (formerly SITA Trust) for the easy access and environmentally friendly update of the Willenhall Chart Centre project.

Willenhall CHART is the only community hub and public amenity open to the community of Willenhall. The centre has been open for 15 years and is in desperate need of a revamp to aid in people's accessibility, enjoyment and energy saving within the centre. The project will be to purchase two external door sets giving easier access. This in particular will aid our elderly provision and help people with disabilities access the building with ease. The project will also include updating our broken dated lighting system in the sport hall creating new energy efficient lighting system. The hall is used every day by low income and vulnerable families for much-needed leisure, support and recreation.

Alana Brayshaw, Development Manager of Willenhall CHART Centre said funding was hard to access so this was great news and an easy application progress, with help from the team at



Sports Time with Willenhall Chart

Suez. "We will be able to update our centre for all users to benefit from, so thank you."

To find out more please call CHART 01902 368 199

Marek Gordon, Chairman of SUEZ Communities Trust added: "SUEZ Communities Trust provides funding awards through the Landfill Communities Fund. This important source of funding has been available since 1997 and has provided such worthy projects with more than £1.4 billion. We were delighted to be able to offer funding to Willenhall CHART Centre."

For information on how to apply for funding from SUEZ Communities Trust call (01454) 262910 or visit www.suezcommunitiestrust.org.uk



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Fox saved from gully after child spotted it



The fox trapped in the gully before it was rescued by RSPCA officers last week

A FOX at risk of drowning was rescued by the RSPCA after getting stuck in an overflow gully.

The stricken fox had fallen into the deep, concrete gully and was unable to escape. The animal was spotted by a child who called the RSPCA's emergency hotline.

Animal collection officer Cara Gibbon went to the scene, in Javelin Avenue, Birmingham, on Thursday afternoon.

She said: "This poor fox was very bedraggled by the time I got there. He'd fallen into the concrete overflow gully and the high, steep sides meant he wouldn't have been able to get out on his own."

The gully was filling with water and, while he'd managed to scramble up onto some debris, when the boy phoned in he was extremely worried that the fox might drown so we knew we'd need to help as quickly as we could."

The fox was exhausted but not injured so she released him to avoid further stress.

Manor hit by nearly £1m fines for waits

WALSALL Manor Hospital has racked up nearly £1m worth of fines for breaching A&E waiting time and ambulance transfer targets over one month, it has been revealed.

It comes after 246 ambulances were made to wait outside the hospital on Moat Road longer than half hour during December, while 35 had to be stranded there for over an hour.

The figures are more than double the number of breaches in the previous month.

The trust incurs a £200 per 30 minute breach and is slapped £1,000 for every 60 minute delay and accumulated an £84,000 bill during the month alone. It brought the total fines levied on Walsall Healthcare NHS Trust for ambulance breaches in the 2017/18 year to £434,000.

But in the same nine month period the organisation has also racked up £508,440 in penalties for the amount of four-hour wait breaches in A&E - £120 per breach. The target is for 95 per cent of emergency patients to be seen, transferred, treated or admitted

By Carl Jackson

with the time frame but in December the Manor managed just 83 per cent.

It was a slight improvement on November's 82 per cent performance but the trust were still hit by £33,000 in fines for month.

Trust chief operating officer Philip Thomas-Hands stated an increase in flu patients had contributed to increased ambulance attendances.

He said: "We've seen an increase in patients with flu and norovirus and this has created additional pressure."

"I'd like to remind the public to consider the most appropriate healthcare service for their needs so that we can keep ED free for those who need it most."

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Vaz calls for libraries move during revamp

A WALSALL MP has called for closed down libraries to be reopened while the town's main library is being refurbished.

Walsall Central Library is set to be shut for the next 10 months for a major revamp.

Valerie Vaz says it means that on the back of closures to Palfrey, Pheasey and Pleck libraries, many of her constituents were not getting 'full access' to services over the period.

She has written to the town council's chief executive and the Culture Secretary Matt Hancock outlining her astonishment over the reduced access to libraries in the borough.

Ms Vaz, who opposed the council's decision to close Pheasey, Pleck and South Walsall libraries last year, said the authority had a statutory duty to provide a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service.

Assessments

"Darlaston Library is simply too far for my constituents in Palfrey, Pheasey and Pleck," she said.

"Many children go to libraries to do their homework as they may not have the resources to do so at home.

"In my letter to Walsall MBC, I asked what assessments were carried out before the closure of Walsall Central Library on the impact on children's access to a library in Walsall South, and whether the council has fulfilled its statutory obligations under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964."

Walsall Council is providing a temporary replacement library service, which started this week, in the main council building. And Walsall district libraries will be increasing their open-



Walsall Central Library in the town centre, which will be having a major revamp ing hours by three hours per week and opening for the first time on Sundays.

Ms Vaz added: "These new opening hours will apply to the temporary replacement library on Lichfield Street, but despite these changes, the library will still only offer a reduced service."

"I suggested to the chief executive that whilst Walsall Central Library is being refurbished, a previously closed library should reopen so that children

and adults can still have full access to library services.

"I raised with the Secretary of State that it is not just favourable for my constituents to have full access to a library, but a necessity, and the Government has statutory duty to provide this. I welcome improvements to libraries but I am astonished that my constituents will be left without full access to a library for up to a year."

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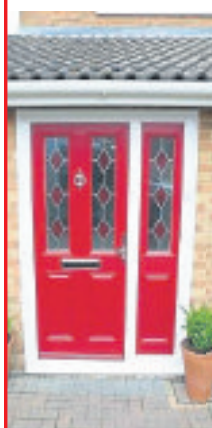


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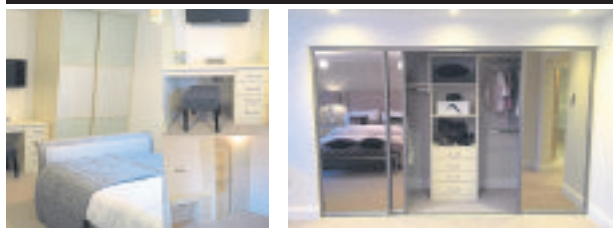


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Protesters fight to keep dog shelter shut

CAMPAIGNERS held a protest in Walsall town centre at the planned reopening of a controversial dog shelter.

The demonstration outside the Town Hall on Saturday marks the latest stage in the saga surrounding Rosedene Rescue Centre.

The dog shelter in Rushall closed down temporarily last month following allegations about conditions at the centre. But it is due to reopen following a revamp in the next two to three weeks and will be under new management.

However, around 30 animal rights protesters and former volunteers gathered in the town centre to and called for it to remain shut.

Organiser Clare Williams said: "We have planned this to make the public aware of the conditions animals were kept in. We know that Rosedene is looking to reopen and we want to stop that from happening."

"The reaction has been amazing - we've had lots of people keeping their horns or coming to talk to us. And we've also had an overwhelming response on social media. We are here to be a voice for the dogs."

Last week, it was revealed that police are investigating allegations of theft and fraud related to claims volunteers had stolen dogs from the home. No-one from Rosedene was available for comment. But a spokesman previously confirmed the centre was being revamped with a view to open by the middle of February.

However, centre bosses still need to formally apply for a new licence from officials at Walsall Council. Petitions calling for the centre to be shut down for good have amassed more than 1,000 signatures.



Organiser Clare Williams and protesters outside Walsall Town Hall taking a stand

Three Degrees statue appeal

A FUNDRAISING campaign has been launched to raise the final cash needed to complete a bronze statue honouring Albion's Three Degrees.

Project organisers need a final £38,000 to complete the delayed statue which is set to be installed in West Bromwich - in tribute to Laurie Cunningham, Brendon Batson and Cyrille Regis.

Murry Toms, who launched the fundraising campaign on Crowdfunder, said there is a new sense of urgency following Cyrille Regis' death and with the 40th anniversary of the Three Degrees' first

game fast approaching. Murry, who works for Crowdfunder, said: "I think the fundraising campaign is a way for supporters to finish off the statue and to say thank you to Cyrille for the role he played in the 70s in paving the way for black players to get into game."

"Cyrille was involved in the project since day one, but unfortunately he can't see it to the end."

Sculptor Graham Ibbeson has been working on the project over the past five years.

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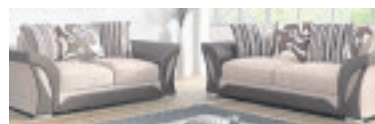


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Hearing on death of Mylee adjourned

AN inquest on tragic schoolgirl Mylee Billingham has been opened and adjourned. The brief hearing took place last Wednesday at Black Country Coroner's Court.

It heard that the eight-year-old's father Bill Billingham, 54, who has been arrested on suspicion of murdering her, is still in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham.

The court at Oldbury was told he was receiving treatment for injuries he sustained the night Mylee died, and will be questioned by police when he is discharged.

Mylee, of First Avenue in Brownhills, was found dead on January 20 at an address in Valley View nearby.

Coroner's investigator Margaret Collins said she was formally identified by her mother.

Det Insp Jim Colclough from the homicide department, said: "West Midlands Police are running a murder investigation into the death of Mylee. Our forensic and witness strategies continue. A male suspect has been arrested on suspicion of murder. He is at Queen

By Carl Jackson

Elizabeth hospital receiving treatment for injuries he sustained that evening. When he is discharged it is my intention to take him to a police station and interview him in relation to the offence."

Emma Whiting, assistant coroner for the Black Country, adjourned the inquest until 'such a time that West Midlands Police are content that it is resumed'.

The scene outside the property where Mylee was killed is awash with flowers while friends of the pupil from St James' Primary School, where she attended, have started fundraising for her family. St James' Church will hold their own fundraiser later this month.

Start of a new ERA for historic firm



David Huse, chairman of the Neighbourhood Watch Network, cuts the ribbon to officially open ERA's new home



ERA's new £10m base at Valiant Way on the business park

AN historic Black Country locksmiths business has relocated to a new £10m purpose-built headquarters. The chairman of the Neighbourhood Watch Network David Huse officially opened home security experts ERA's 135,625 sq ft base at Wolverhampton's i54 business park.

The Valiant Way site has brought together three former sites in the city, Willenhall and Coventry and ERA, part of the Tyman group since 2007, now employs 150 and has a turnover of £80m.

Chief executive Darren Waters said: "In moving, staying true to our roots in the Black Country was important. What makes ERA unique is our people and we were keen to retain as many as possible."

He said only four, including two who retired, had chosen not to move to the new site. ERA's roots were in Willenhall where the original business was founded as John Reynolds locksmiths in Fletcher Lane in 1838.







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Passengers delayed after lorry hits bridge

TRAIN passengers faced disruption after a lorry hit a bridge and smashed onto its side.

People catching trains between Lichfield and Birmingham were warned services may be cancelled.

The lorry stuck the bridge in Summer Road, Erdington, carrying rail services on the Cross-City Line.

The lorry driver, escaped from the 44-ton truck, prior to emergency services arriving. He was being treated at the scene for minor injuries.

Rail operators West Midlands Railways said replacement buses were running between the Lichfield City, Trent Valley and Sutton Coldfield stations.

Officials said train tickets were being accepted on buses during the disruption which they expected to last until 4pm.

Fire crews from Perry Barr and Erdington stations were at the scene at around 12pm.

Firefighters tweeted: "A HGV has come to rest on its side after striking the bridge. Please be mindful and avoid the area if possible. Road likely to be blocked for some time."

Summer Road was closed after the crash.



The lorry crash. Picture: Perry Barr Fire Station/West Midlands Fire Service

Ex-MP hits out at claims

A FORMER MP has claimed a woman who alleged he had sexually abused her on Cannock Chase 'deliberately lied'.

John Hemming, ex-Liberal Democrat MP, made the allegation about former Walsall schoolgirl Esther Baker in a letter of complaint to the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In 2015, Ms Baker sparked a two-year police investigation after alleging a child sex abuse ring operated on the Chase. She waived her anonymity to claim children were assaulted during the 1980s and 90s while others filmed

the heinous acts and police stood watch. However, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) concluded there was 'insufficient evidence' to secure convictions.

Mr Hemming's letter comes as it emerged Ms Baker had been awarded 'core participant' status at the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse. Mr Hemming, who was MP for Birmingham Yardley, has written to the CPS demanding answers, according to reports.

His letter says: "I am writing to express concern about the slow handling of allegations about me made by Esther Baker that are currently being considered by the CPS. The CPS should also consider my counter com-

plaint that Ms Baker deliberately lied, and therefore committed the offence of perverting the course of justice."

Mr Hemming said in a statement the allegations saw him face a 'dreadful experience', leading to a 'campaign of vilification' against him. Speaking about suggestions the police could investigate an attempt to pervert the course of justice, Ms Baker said: "I am quite open for them to try. I have done nothing wrong."

A CPS spokesman confirmed an initial decision on Ms Baker's file had been to take no further action. However, since she enforced her Victims' Right to Review, the matter is now being considered by an independent prosecutor.

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Smile for Joel charity is granted official status

AN organisation set up in memory of three members of the same family killed in a terror attack has been given official charity status.

Smile for Joel has already raised £100,000 since its inception – and has now been granted official status.

The charity was set up to honour Joel Richards, Adrian Evans and Patrick Evans who were killed in Tunisia in 2015. Joel's mother Suzy Evans and her son Owen – Joel's younger brother who survived the attack – set up the organisation to support other families who have been affected through similarly traumatic experiences.

Fundraising events organised by the charity have included the Run for Joel in Sandwell Valley, a celebrity football match at Walsall's Banks's Stadium and numerous other evenings of entertainment.

Excited

Having charity status will allow Miss Evans the scope to 'change things for the better' in the travel industry. She said: "We are very pleased and excited to announce that we now have charity status, and have raised over £100,000 for fellow charity Victim Support. This means we can continue to grow on a bigger platform and continue to help families affected by murder."

"Smile for Joel is in memory of my family, but also in memory of all those that never came home – 38 innocent holidaymakers were killed that tragic day. We're going to still be in that partnership with Victim Support. Nothing will change on that side of it, but it will give me a chance to look at the travel industry and see how we can change things for the better."



Suzy Evans and her son Owen, with Smile for Joel charity collection boxes

Miss Evans, who has worked in the travel industry for more than 30 years, set out three aims for the charity as:

*To continue to work along side Victim Support to provide support to families affected by murder.

*To raise awareness of 'safety before a sale' by providing support to promote good practise to improve the safety of holiday makers.

*Promote a more tolerant and di-

verse society by seeking to promote British values in educational establishment.

Miss Evans added: "In this day and age this is needed. If security measures had been looked at in my family's hotel, lives may have been saved. It was stated in the inquest, this five-star hotel had the weakest security."

To contact Smile for Joel or for more information visit smileforjoel.com

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Pledge on better rail links after HS2 built

TRAIN services passing through Sandwell and other areas will not be forgotten in the wake of HS2, the Transport Secretary said.

Chris Grayling was giving the second reading of The High Speed Rail (Phase 2a) Bill in the Houses of Parliament which was set to be passed by MPs last Tuesday.

The route will go from Fradley near Lichfield to Crewe, cutting through countryside in Staffordshire, impact communities in Great Haywood, Ingestre, Hopton, Marston, and Yarnet. Once the bill is passed, the proposed route, which comes after approval for the HS2 route from London to Birmingham, will go to a scrutiny committee.

During the Parliament session, Lichfield MP Michael Fabricant said the route would see the loss of 27 ancient trees from Lichfield to Crewe. He also said: "Could I ask him [Mr Grayling] not to take his eye off a distant ball which is the future of the West Coast mainline after HS2 is constructed. There is concern there is over 44 stations not

By Alex Ross

served by HS2 on the West Coast main line so it is very important that passenger traffic is still maintained on the West Coast mainline."

Mr Grayling replied: "What I think that HS2 will deliver, and I'm someone who sails through those stations on many, many occasions on Pendolino trains, the reality is we can and should do better at those intermediate stations."

"We should provide better commuter links into Birmingham, we should provide better links within the Trent Valley, Nuneaton to Lichfield and up to Stafford. All of these things are things we will be able to do with greater degree in the future."

Milking it for a new addition at farm



One of the Forge Mill Farm's latest attractions, a Jersey cow, with daily milkings taking place at 11am

THREE new arrivals are attracting the crowds at Forge Mill Farm in Sandwell Valley. Victoria, Beth and Polly the Jersey cows have moved in and visitors are invited to go along to meet them and see them being milked.

The ladies, who are on loan from Sheldon Country Park, can be seen being milked at 11am every day. And their delicious milk - they produce around seven litres each a day - should soon be on sale at the farm shop.

Admission to Forge Mill Farm is usually free, with a small charge for admission and some activities during school holidays. The farm also offers educational visits for schools at Sandwell Valley aimed at Key Stages 1 and 2.

The school visits take place from May to July and can be booked by 0121 569 3070. Neighbouring RSPB Sandwell Valley, located just off the Newton Road in Great Barr, also offers educational visits. To book, email SandwellEducation@rspb.org.uk or call 0121 357 7395.



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The Rolex Panerai Military Diver watch. Picture: courtesy of Fellows auctioneers



This shot shows the watch movement



The bridge at Nijmegen which the Germans tried to destroy with charges



British soldier George H Rowson, who acquired the watch

One to watch – as historic timepiece fetches £52,000

A RARE and historic Second World War watch has sold at auction for more than £50,000.

The Rolex Panerai Military Diver watch was estimated to fetch £30,000 to £40,000 but sold last Tuesday for a total, including fees, of £52,316.

Bids came flying in from three telephone bidders at Fellows auction house in Birmingham as the price quickly grew.

There were gasps across the saleroom as the bids soared.

This model of Panerai watch was initially intended for the Italian Decima MAS until they were taken by the Germans.

The German Kampfschwimmer who owned the watch is known

MEMORY LANE

By David Banner

to have received special training in Italy and wore an Italian-made specialised rubber dive suit as part of wartime operations in rivers and waterways.

The watch came into the possession of British soldier George H Rowson during an attempt by German forces to destroy the Nijmegen Bridge in the Netherlands in September 1944, following the unsuccessful push by the Allies, Operation Market Garden.

According to a first-hand account of the incident, by Mr Rowson, who acquired the watch at 6.30am on September 29, 1944, German Kampfschwimmers fixed

charges underwater to the main supports of the bridge at Nijmegen.

Once the German soldiers had completed their mission, they exited the river thinking they were back within their own lines.

At this point, they were captured by a section of British soldiers which included Mr Rowson.

The charges they had placed were defused and so Nijmegen Bridge remained undamaged.

Training

The Panerai was sold with a hand-written account of the event by Mr Rowson, a section of the rubber diving suit acquired from the German soldier, and photocopies of important documents related to Mr Rowson.

It was later passed down to his

son, who lives in Nuneaton, and has remained in their family ever since.

Mr Rowson's hand-written account of the incident said: "German frogmen towed the charges down the Rhine to Nijmegen Bridge and fixed them underwater to the main supports."

"Unfortunately for them, they came out of the river too soon thinking they were back in their own lines again."

"I was the sergeant along with my section who captured them and took them prisoner."

"They were wearing these rubber suits and also each had a watch on one wrist and a compass on the other. These men had special training in Italy and the suits were made in Italy."

"The charges they had placed

were defused and so Nijmegen bridge remained undamaged."

The watch also has a hand-carved inscription on the reverse detailing Mr Rowson's full name, rank and the year the piece was acquired in 1944.

Laura Bishop, watch manager at Fellows Auctioneers, said: "It is amazing to have a piece of history sell at Fellows Auctioneers. We are delighted to have been able to sell it for the local family."

Alexandra Whittaker, a spokesperson for Fellows Auctioneers, said: "Fellows is becoming known for our monthly specialist watch sales and we are happy to have started our first sale of the year with such a prestigious piece as our star lot."

"I am excited to see what our February Watch Sale will bring."

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WOLVERHAMPTON
MAGAZINE

£100m repair works put in focus



The repairs can be seen on one half of the motorway as traffic on the other side moves across four narrow lanes

M5 'good progress' pledge

THIS aerial picture shows the massive scale of £100 million repair works on a Midlands motorway.

Work on the M5 at the Oldbury viaduct started in January last year and is due to continue until the autumn, with minor works running into next year.

Highways England said the improvements to the ageing viaduct – including concrete repairs and waterproofing – is the largest concrete repair project, by value, ever carried out in Britain.

Work is well under way along a two-

mile section on the viaduct's south-bound carriageway, between junctions one for West Bromwich and two for Oldbury.

"Later this year work will switch to the northbound carriageway. Highways England senior project manager Zbigniew Twarowski said: "The scale of this project is vast.

"Much of the work takes place underneath the viaduct and so workers cannot always be seen on the surface itself. We continue to make good progress on the repairs and we thank motorists, businesses and residents for their patience."

There are almost 500 people on the

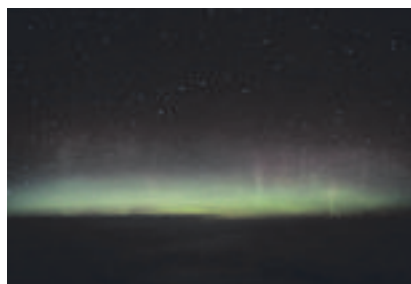
project, who have so far worked more than 660,000 hours.

Workers have erected almost 248 miles (400km) of scaffolding – with enough scaffold boards to cover seven football pitches and enough staircases and loading bays to get to the top of Ben Nevis and Snowdon.

They have been tasked with removing and reconstructing more than 10,000 cubic metres of concrete joints – as well as removing and replacing 4,000 tons of concrete, 30,000 tons of road surface, more than 100,000 sq m of waterproofing, 200 tons of steel reinforcing the structure and 250 lighting columns.

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Carillion collapse: city jobs among 400 to go

NEARLY 400 Carillion workers are to be made redundant, including some at the firm's Wolverhampton HQ, the official receiver said.

More than 900 people at the construction and services giant have had their jobs protected, moving them to new companies taking over contracts they were working on.

The job losses are among back-office staff working on delivering a range of contracts around the country. Around 253 were working on public sector contracts and 124 for the private sector.

A spokesman for the Official Receiver said: "As part of the on-



Carillion's Wolverhampton HQ

going liquidation of the Carillion group I am pleased we have been able to safeguard the jobs of 919 employees today. Most staff are transferring on existing or simi-

lar terms and I will continue to facilitate this wherever possible as we work to find new providers for Carillion's other contracts.

"Despite best efforts it has not been possible to secure the jobs of 377 staff, who will be made redundant."

The spokesman added: "I am expecting many employees working on other Carillion contracts to transfer in the coming weeks and we are continuing to keep the workforce updated as these arrangements are finalised."

"Those affected will be entitled to make a claim for statutory redundancy payments."

Around 400 staff work at the Carillion headquarters on the Ring Road St Marks in Wolverhampton city centre. Most of them are likely to remain work-

ing during the liquidation process as they provide detailed information on contracts to the Official Receiver and the team of special managers from accountants PwC who are working on the breakup of the company.

Carillion employed more than 19,000 of its 43,000 strong global workforce in the UK.

Its failure has left work at a standstill on the projects such as the Midland Metropolitan Hospital at Smethwick and part of the £700m Paradise Birmingham redevelopment.

Around 30,000 sub contractors and suppliers could be owed up to £1 billion that may never be paid, and the company was weighed down by debts of nearly £1 billion as well as a pension deficit of almost £600m.

Gwen and Yan fare-ly good friends



Yan and Gwen with the cheque for £1,225

AN unlikely friendship between a taxi driver and his pensioner passenger has become an internet sensation.

Around 69,000 people have now watched a video of Cannock worker Yan Simonski, aged 32, handing over £1,225 he raised for his friend, 84-year-old Gwendoline Herrington.

Gwendoline, or 'Gwen' as he fondly calls her, is retired and often cooks meals for her 63-year-old daughter, who suffers with rheumatoid arthritis, which affects her wrists and hands.

Yan decided to raise the money for Gwen, who is from Cannock, because he wanted her to have the chance to treat herself. He said: "I did it because I know the money will go to good use. And her daughter has arthritis so she is back and forth every day cooking and cleaning."

"I am so impressed and surprised with the amount that was raised. If it was not for everyone that donated, it would not have happened."

The pair have a Facebook page called Gwendoline and Yan where they post short Snapchat videos of themselves. Last week they uploaded a video of Gwen's shocked reaction to the donations.

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The performances follow a record-breaking UK and Ireland Tour, during which it earned rave reviews.

Shrek the Musical is based on the story and characters from the Oscar®-winning DreamWorks Animation film.

The hilarious and spectacular production turns the world of fairytales upside down in an all-singing, all-dancing, must-see musical comedy.

Shrek and his loyal steed Donkey set off on a quest to rescue the beautiful Princess Fiona (Laura Main) from her tower, guarded by a fire breathing love-sick dragon.

The fun gets serious with the vertically challenged Lord Farquaad, a gang of fairytale misfits, and a biscuit with attitude, creating an irresistible mix of adventure, laughter and romance that is guaranteed to delight audiences of all ages.

Steffan loves it: "I was over the moon to be given the part. I toured with Shrek and was an understood to Lord Farquaad. When I got the call to do the lead role this time, I was playing in Les Miserables. It doesn't get much different from that to this. But I jumped at the opportunity. I was keen not to go back to the part of Farquaad because I'd done that. I thought it would be good to have a go at Shrek this time and a few auditions later they gave me the job. I was over the moon."

He laughs when he remembers how he learned he was going to take the starring role. He was at work and it was about 7pm, half an hour before he was due on stage in Les Miserables in the West End. "It was incredible. I went on stage still buzzing from the news. That show was a bit of a whirlwind. But I do love Shrek the Musical. Not only is the music absolutely brilliant and a pleasure to sing every night, the show also has a book that is so funny and witty."

In some respects, Shrek is like a pantomime. It's designed equally with parents and children in mind – with some gags going over the kids' heads and causing mirth among their parents.

"You're right. It's not just for the kids it's for the adults as well. The dads who are dragged for the Saturday matinee come out laughing because of the Lord Farquaad material. The kids don't really get that."

Steffan is well-versed in the original 2001 Shrek movie, having enjoyed the best-selling computer-animated fantasy based on William Steig's 1990 fairy tale picture book of the same name. He enjoyed the voice overs from Mike Myers, Eddie Murphy, Cameron Diaz and John Lithgow – not forgetting the equally enjoyable sequels.

"I'm 26 now so I was about 10 when it came out. I remember quite vividly going to the Welshpool Solar Cinema to watch it. When I got the job, I went back to watch the film. It really is brilliant." Shrek is a real feather in Steffan's cap.

Some day my prince will come –
Shrek and Princess Fiona



After all, he's still only 26 and is already leading the line in major touring productions. He learned his trade in a quite backwater, Caereinion, in Mid-Wales, near Welshpool.

"They didn't offer drama at Caereinion High School so I looked elsewhere and Theatr Maldwyn came about in year 7-8. I learned a lot from the three teachers there and that helped me massively. That made me look elsewhere and that's when I decided to do drama and gained a place at the Guildford School of Acting. It was a fantastic school and I had the best three years there learning some fantastic skills. Now I'm out working – and that's when the real learning starts."

Steffan is thoroughly enjoying his career. He's striking out, making a name for himself and taking up opportunities that come his way. "It's great and there's such variety – literally, from Les Miserables to Shrek."

"This part is totally different to everything I've ever done before. I have a 90-minute make-up call every day so that I can be fully transformed with prosthetics. After that, I have to put on the costume

The dads who are dragged for the Saturday matinee come out laughing

and that weighs an additional 45lbs." Once all that is done, he's transformed and ready to play the ogre. He has created his own interpretation of Shrek from scratch, putting his own stamp on it.

"It's unusual to go out when you're so heavily made up. After the show, I go out of the stage door onto the street and pass people who've seen the show and they have no idea that it was me. But the anonymity doesn't mean I don't connect with Shrek – I do. OK, so Lord Farquaad steals a few scenes, but Shrek is completely believable. He has to be."

Life is moving quickly for Steffan and he's looking forward to starring at a major theatre in Birmingham so early into his career.

"I never thought I'd be leading a show at the age of 26. It's a great honour and I've very fortunate to them for giving me the opportunity. But there's a lot more that I'd like to do. I'd love to do straight drama and TV as well. I've done a bit of TV back in Wales on S4C and I would love doing more and see where it takes me. I'd like to work again in London again too. Working and being happy and healthy is as much as I can ask for and I'm very grateful that I have these opportunities."

● For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.



Inheaven – turbocharged riffs



Indie rock fans will be Inheaven for arts centre gig

SOUTH London indie rockers Inheaven bring their turbocharged riffs to Wolverhampton's Newhampton Arts Centre (NAC) on Tuesday.

The quartet built around the instant hooks and striking vocals of guitarist James Taylor and bassist Chloe Little were snapped up by the Cult Records label, run by The Strokes' Julian Casablancas.

Their self-titled debut album was released last September including the single Regeneration. The

band have since released an acoustic EP and a new track for the new year, Sweet Dreams Baby.

There's another major indie rock night at the NAC, on Dunkley Street, next Friday, February 16, when one of Birmingham's top bands, JAWS, top a triple bill also featuring Synthetic Recipe and Tinned Astronaut.

Gigs tonight (Thursday) include Nightmares on Wax at the Hare and Hounds in Kings Heath in support of new album Shape The Future, and satirical rockers Half Man Half Biscuit with The Humdrum Express at the Robin 2 in Bilston.

Got those cigar box guitar blues



Smethwick guitar maker and musician John Wormald – aka Chickenbone John, The Godfather of The Cigar Box Guitar – is back again with Boxstock, the UK Cigar Box Guitar Festival.

Following the success of last year's event at the Slade Rooms, the festival returns to the Wolverhampton venue for more homemade blues-busting guitar on Saturday.

In a time when money's too tight to mention, just like the old days, some hard-up musicians have gone

back to the traditional approach of literally making their own entertainment by making their own instruments.

Seasick Steve helped bring this humble instrument to worldwide attention. As he doesn't do many UK dates these days, here's an opportunity to catch some real roots music on your own doorstep.

Heading the bill are Blackriver Bluesman and Bad Mood Hudson, a heavy metal duo all the way from Finland. After being the success of last year's event, the festival has brought back the Dusk Brothers from Bristol and super-busker Bemuzic from Cambridge.

During the daytime Chickenbone John, pictured, will be leading workshops on how to make cigar box guitars and powerhouse one-man band Hollowbelly will be leading sessions on how to play the cigar box guitar.

During these daytime sessions there will also be plenty of traders selling their handmade instruments, plus open mic sessions for those who feel ready to perform.

It's also an ideal way to find out more about the alt-blues music scene.

Tickets for the evening gig are £14 but admission is free at the Slade Rooms from noon to 5.30pm.

Ballet is a beauty in the Russian style

The curse of a wicked fairy means a beautiful princess falls into an enchanted sleep which can only be broken by a prince's kiss. Enter the opulent world of Imperial Russia for one of the grandest ballets with a score by Tchaikovsky and choreography by Marius Petipa. The Sleeping Beauty



is a highlight from the Birmingham Royal Ballet repertoire on a par with The Nutcracker. The Sleeping Beauty is at Birmingham Hippodrome from Tuesday to Saturday, February 24.

Comedy nights with reality TV bridegroom

There's a funny week coming up with several top comedians in the area. Canadian stand-up Bobby Mair, as seen on Russell Howard's Good News and 8 Out Of 10 Cats, is at Wolverhampton's Slade Rooms tomorrow night (Friday). Last year Bobby – apparently a distant cousin to Justin Beiber – featured on a reality TV show about his wedding to fellow comic Harriet Kemsley. Bobby And Harriet Get Married was shown on the Viceland channel. Bobby will be back in the region at Bromsgrove Artrix on February 17 and Birmingham Glee Club on March 9.

Next Thursday (Feb 15) Alun Cochrane is at the Slade Rooms. A TV regular, Alun is also co-host of The Frank Skinner Show on Absolute Radio. The master of puns and one-liners Milton Jones is at the New Alexandra Theatre in Birmingham on Sunday.

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The Ticket

CHOICE



Brenda Emmanus

Charles I's Treasures Reunited (BBC2, 9pm)

His merits as a monarch may have been called into question (to put it mildly), but Charles I did have an impressive eye for a painting, acquiring pieces by the finest artists of the past, including D. rer, Rubens, Titian and Holbein, and commissioning works from leading contemporary artists such as Van Dyck and Rubens. Following his execution in 1649, his collection was sold off by Cromwell and scattered across Europe. Charles II reclaimed some pieces, but others went on to be shown in museums across the world. Now for the first time since the 17th century, the key masterpieces have been reunited and are on display at the Royal Academy. Brenda Emmanus presents.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **10.00** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day one from PyeongChang, South Korea. **12.00** Football Focus. **1.00** BBC News. **12.00** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Continued coverage of day one from PyeongChang, South Korea. **4.30** Final Score. **5.25** BBC News. **5.35** Regional Programme. **5.45** And They're Off for Sport Relief.

6.25 **Pointless Celebrities.** Sarah Millican, Gary Delaney, Jack Carroll, Terry Alderton, Lee Hurst, Arthur Smith, Helen Lederer and Carad Lloyd take part in a comedy-themed edition of the unorthodox quiz show.

7.15 **All Together Now.** Rob Beckett hosts as more singers step on-stage for a chance to win a £50,000 cash prize, performing hits as varied as Sia's Chandelier, Oasis's Don't Look Back in Anger, and Whitney Houston's I Wanna Dance with Somebody. The judging panel takes the form of "The 100", a large collective of music experts and performers from all over the UK.

8.20 **Casualty.** The day of Blake's trial arrives, and Elle finds herself face-to-face with his victim, Miles, when he is rushed into the ED after collapsing at home.

9.10 **BBC News:** Weather.

9.30 **Hard Sun.** Grace Morrison is apprehended by the police and brought in for questioning. Determined to keep themselves and their loved ones from harm's way, Hicks and Renko come up with a scheme that will turn Morrison's government colleagues against her, but the veteran spook refuses to let herself be outmanoeuvred so easily. Meanwhile, a woman's car is found abandoned near a meadow, with what appears to be a suicide note left on the dashboard. Last in the series.

10.30 **Match of the Day.** Gary Lineker presents highlights of the latest Premier League matches, including Tottenham Hotspur v Arsenal and Manchester City v Leicester City.

11.50 **Live Winter Olympics 2018.** Radzi Chinyanganya presents coverage of the latest events on day two of the 23rd staging of the Games.

2.00 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Further coverage from PyeongChang, South Korea.

BBC2

6.00 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day one from PyeongChang, South Korea. **10.00** Saturday Kitchen Live. **11.30** Mary Berry Everyday. (R) **12.00** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Continued coverage of day one from PyeongChang, South Korea. **1.15** The Hairy Bikers' Mediterranean Adventure. (R) **2.15** Escape to the Country. **3.00** Italy's Invisible Cities. (R) **4.00** Nigel Slater's Middle East. (R) **5.00** Dragons' Den. (R)

6.00 **Hugh's Wild West.** Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall's tour of the West Country continues as he explores the Forest of Dean. He enlists the aid of local wildlife enthusiasts to track down imposing wild boar, which have returned to the area for the first time in 300 years. He also has a close encounter with a goshawk, a bird of prey that specialises in hunting in woodland, and one that has come to be known locally as "the phantom of the forest".

7.00 **Winter Olympics - Today at the Games.** Clare Balding presents highlights of the opening day's action from the 23rd staging of the Games, which takes place in PyeongChang, South Korea.

8.00 **Dad's Army.** A secret weapon goes haywire and threatens Walmington-on-Sea. (R)

8.30 **Grand Tours of Scotland's Lochs.** Paul Merton explores lochs close to the Central Belt, starting on the banks of the Lake of Menteith and ending by climbing Ben Venue in the Trossachs. Last in the series.

9.00 **Charles I's Treasures Reunited.** Documentary detailing how the Royal Academy reunited works of art that once formed part of Charles I's substantial collection, but were sold off piecemeal following his execution.

10.00 **Film: The Young Victoria.** (2009) In the early years of the queen's reign, she is drawn into a power struggle and falls in love with her cousin and eventual husband. Period drama, with Emily Blunt and Rupert Friend.

11.35 **Film: Love Is All You Need.** (2012) A Danish woman recovering from treatment for cancer falls in love with the widowed father of her daughter's fiancé. Romantic drama, with Pierce Brosnan and Trine Dyrholm.

1.25 Weather for the Week Ahead. **1.30** BBC News.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knockout Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knockout Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stars: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel Ultimate Spider-Man vs The Sinister Six. **7.30** Scrambled!: Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled!: The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled!: Fangbone. (R) **8.10** Scrambled!: The Powerpuff Girls. (R) **8.30** Scrambled!: Be Cool, Scooby-Do! (R) **9.05** Scrambled!: Wishart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** James Martin's Saturday Morning. **11.20** Dancing on Ice. (R) **1.15** Regional Programme : Weather. **1.20** ITV News. **1.30** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Ireland v Italy (Kick-off 2.15pm). **4.20** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. England v Wales (Kick-off 4.45pm).

7.00 **Take Me Out.** Paddy McGuinness presents as more single men enter his "Love Life" in the hope of impressing his panel of 30 unattached ladies. This time, Josh, a fitness fanatic from Woking, Dan, a volcanologist from Bristol, HR manager Martin from Sunderland, and Tai, an NHS worker from Birmingham will be hoping to find romance. Plus, a chance to catch up with last week's couples.

8.15 **The Voice UK.** Emma Willis ushers more would-be stars onto the stage, as the penultimate round of Blind Auditions arrives. Once again, the singers will be asked to perform in front of coaches Will.i.am, Olly Murs, Jennifer Hudson and Tom Jones, who all must appraise their skills with their backs to the performer. Only once they have decided to pledge their support are the coaches permitted to spin their chair around to greet the singer in question.

9.45 **Through the Keyhole.** Keith Lemon challenges Jimmy Carr, Eamonn Holmes and Scarlett Moffatt to guess which celebrity homes he has infiltrated.

10.35 **ITV News:** Weather.

10.50 **Film: Lethal Weapon 2.** (1989) The detectives set their sights on a South African diplomat laundering drugs money via his embassy in the US. Action thriller sequel, with Mel Gibson, Danny Glover and Joss Ackland.

1.00 You've Been Framed! (R) **1.30** Jackpot247. **3.00** Babushka. (R) **3.50** ITV Nightscreen.

CHANNEL 4

6.20 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **6.45** 3rd Rock from the Sun. (R) **7.10** The King of Queens. (R) **7.35** The King of Queens. (R) **8.00** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Frasier. (R) **10.00** Frasier. (R) **10.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.00** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **11.30** The Big Bang Theory. (R) **12.00** The Simpsons. (R) **12.30** The Simpsons. (R) **1.00** The Simpsons. (R) **1.30** Come Dine with Me. (R) **2.30** Coast vs Country. (R) **3.30** A Place in the Sun. (R) **4.30** The Secret Life of the Zoo. (R) **5.35** The Supertv. (R)

6.30 **Channel 4 News.**

7.00 **Great Canal Journeys.** Timothy West and Prunella Scales return to Wales to explore a canal that has eluded them for more than half a century. The Monmouthshire and Brecon canal is cut off from the rest of Britain's network of waterways by the Black Mountains, and meanders its way through the tranquil Usk valley. Along the way the couple visit the old ironworks at Blaenavon, where children as young as five were once put to work, and lend a hand with some lock restoration work. They also explore the castle at Tretower - which is rumoured to be haunted. Last in the series. (R)

8.00 **Village of the Year Final with Penelope Keith.** The four remaining villages compete in the grand final, with residents of each community putting on a special event to showcase what makes their home special. Last in the series.

9.00 **Film: Die Hard 4.0.** (2007) Tough New York cop John McClane is sent to escort a computer hacker to Washington for questioning. During this routine operation he stumbles on a criminal mastermind's plan to launch a technological terrorist attack on the US, and is forced to enlist the hacker's aid in foiling the evil scheme. Action thriller sequel, with Bruce Willis, Timothy Olyphant, Justin Long and Maggie Q.

11.35 **Film: Ted.** (2012) A boy's magical living teddy remains his friend into adulthood, creating tension with his girlfriend. Comedy, starring Mark Wahlberg, with the voice of Seth MacFarlane.

1.25 The Last Leg. (R) **2.20** Hollyoaks. (R) **4.25** Coast vs Country. (R) **5.20** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake! **10.05** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.40** Pets Make You Laugh Out Loud. (R) **11.05** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.00** Police Interceptors. (R) **1.00** The A-Team. (R) **2.00** The A-Team. (R) **3.00** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **4.00** Can't Pay? We'll Take It Away. (R) **5.00** Rich House, Poor House. (R)

6.00 **The Wonderful World of Puppies.** The documentary concludes, offering an insight into the final stages of a puppy's early development. This time, the focus falls on how fun, engaging activities help young canines to improve their ability to learn - and their general state of happiness. Last in the series.

7.00 **Cruising with Jane McDonald: Caribbean.** The singer embarks on a series of ocean odysseys, and while she is no stranger to the open sea, having found fame on 1998 BBC TV documentary The Cruise, the mega-cruiser she boards is a far cry from the 600-passenger vessel she is used to. In the opening edition, she and her fellow passengers stop off in Nassau in the Bahamas, where Jane finds solace in the state's oldest baptist church. (R)

8.00 **The World's Most Luxurious Cruise Ship.** Part one of two. Following engineers and designers as they construct the liner Seven Seas Explorer, aiming to make it the most luxurious ship in the world of its size. (R)

8.55 **5 News Weekend.**

9.00 **Football on 5: The Championship.** Colin Murray introduces highlights from the weekend's games in the Championship, including Wolverhampton Wanderers v Queens Park Rangers and Barnsley v Sheffield Wednesday.

10.00 **Football on 5: Goal Rush.** Colin Murray introduces all the goals from the weekend's games in Leagues One and Two, including AFC Wimbledon v Northampton Town and Bradford City v Bury.

10.30 **Film: The Silence of the Lambs.** (1991) A trainee FBI agent engages in a battle of wits with an imprisoned psychopath to gain his help in catching a serial killer. Thriller, starring Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins.

12.40 SuperCasino. **3.10** Cowboy Builders. (R) **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Great Scientists. (R) **5.35** Wildlife SOS. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Sicily: Wonder of the Mediterranean
8.00 Winter Olympics Extra **9.00** Modus
10.30 The Fall: The Wonderful and Frightening World of Mark E. Smith **11.30** Top of the Pops: 1985 **12.35** Rock 'n' Roll Guns for Hire: The Story of the Sideman
2.05 Sicily: Wonder of the Mediterranean
3.05 Close

ITV2
11.55 Take Me Out **1.10** Mr Bean **1.45** Film: Beethoven (1992) **2.50** FYI Daily **2.55** Film: Beethoven (1992) **3.30** Film: Valentine's Day (2010) **4.45** FYI Daily **4.50** Film: Valentine's Day (2010) **5.55** Film: The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2013) **6.55** FYI Daily **7.00** Film: The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug (2013) **9.00** Film: The Hangover Part II (2011) **10.00** FYI Daily **10.05** Film: The Hangover Part II (2011) **11.05** Family Guy **12.05** American Dad! **1.00** Release the Hounds **2.00** Ibiza Weekender **2.50** Teleshopping **5.50** ITV2 Nightscreen

ITV3
11.15 A Touch of Frost **1.25** Film: Colombo: The Greenhouse Jungle (1972) **3.00** Agatha Christie's Marple **5.00** Midsomer Murders **7.00** The Durrells **9.00** Midsomer Murders **11.00** Lewis **1.00** The Good Karma Hospital **1.55** ITV3 Nightscreen **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV4
11.35 Fishing Impossible **12.35** Pawn Stars **1.30** ITV Racing: Live from Newbury. Coverage of today's meetings at Newbury and Warwick. **4.00** Film: Lonely Are the Brave (1962) **5.05** FYI Daily **5.10** Film: Lonely Are the Brave (1962) **6.15** Storage Wars **6.45** Live Snooker Shoot-Out. Coverage of the third day's play at the single-frame tournament. **11.00** Film: Green Zone (2010) **12.00** FYI Daily **12.05** Film: Green Zone (2010) **1.15** Minder **2.20** The Car Chasers **2.40** ITV4 Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4
11.00 The Goldbergs **1.30** Toy Story Toons: PartySaurus Rex **1.40** The Big Bang Theory **6.45** Film: The Devil Wears Prada (2006) **9.00** Film: Riddick (2013) **11.20** Gogglebox **12.30** Naked Attraction **1.30** Celebs Go Dating **4.20** How I Met Your Mother **5.05** Rude(ish) Tube **Film4**
11.00 Catch That Kid (2004) **1.00** Dr Seuss' The Lorax (2012) **2.45** Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2010) **4.35** Volcano (1997) **6.35** I, Robot (2004) **9.00** The Other Woman (2014) **11.10** The Fly (1986) **1.00** Young Detective Dee: Rise of the Sea Dragon (2013) **3.45** Close

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CHOICE



Tom Garrison

Lost Pyramids of the Maya (Channel 4, 8pm)

The Mayan civilisation is now sadly consigned to the history books, but its legacy resonates strongly within our own to this day – whether it's elements of architecture still found within Mexico and Central America, ancient prehispanic sites scattered throughout the region, or in the plotlines of Hollywood movies (for some reason we're preoccupied with misinterpreted Mayan prophecies of armageddon). This documentary utilises exclusive access to the results of a huge scientific research project to learn more about the ancient civilisation, revealing fascinating insights into a people who remained largely hidden within the jungles, and transforming everything we thought we knew about the Maya.

BBC1

6.00 Breakfast. **7.35** Match of the Day. (R) **9.00** The Andrew Marr Show. **10.00** The Big Questions. **11.00** Regional Programme. **12.15** BBC News: Weather. **12.30** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day two from PyeongChang, South Korea. **2.30** Live Six Nations Rugby Union. Scotland v France (Kick-off 3.00pm). **5.00** Songs of Praise. **5.35** Celebrity Mastermind. (R)

6.05 BBC News.

6.20 Regional Programme.

6.30 **Countryfile.** Ellie Harrison and Matt Baker visit Cambridgeshire, where a project is underway to turn a quarry into a safe red bed habitat for one of the UK's rarest birds, the bittern. Richard Taylor-Jones witnesses a spectacular display of wildlife. Adam Henson meets a young farmer in the New Forest, and Tom Heap discovers how Bill Gates is making the most of British agricultural expertise.

7.30 **Still Open All Hours.** Granville goes to Scarborough hoping to catch up with Mavis, and leaves Leroy in charge of the shop – which soon has an unconscious customer on the floor. Last in the series.

8.00 **Call the Midwife.** Sister Julianne helps a woman from Pakistan who is unable to have children, but who has found to her shock that her husband is bringing a pregnant second wife into their home.

9.00 **McMafia.** Alex travels to Moscow on business, unaware of the danger he is rushing into. He has only one way to save himself as he faces a final showdown with Vadim. Last in the series.

10.00 BBC News.

10.20 Regional Programme.

10.30 **Match of the Day 2.** Mark Chapman reviews the day's Premier League action – Newcastle United v Manchester United, Southampton v Liverpool and Huddersfield Town v Bournemouth.

11.35 **The Women's Football Show.** A look at the biggest issues in the women's game, focusing on matters at both club and international level.

12.10 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day three from PyeongChang, South Korea. **3.30** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Continued coverage of day three from PyeongChang, South Korea.

BBC2

6.00 Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day two from PyeongChang, South Korea. **9.15** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day two from PyeongChang, South Korea. **12.30** Saturday Kitchen Best Bites. **2.00** Food & Drink. (R) **2.30** Back in Time for Tea. (R) **3.30** The Crane Gang. (R) **4.30** Live Winter Olympics 2018. Coverage of day two from PyeongChang, South Korea.

6.00 **New York: America's Busiest City.** Anita Rani, Ade Adepitan, Ant Anstead and Dan Snow look at food consumption in the Big Apple. From dusk until dawn at the New Fulton fish market in the Bronx, they uncover the hidden night time operations, hard-nosed negotiations and price fluctuations of this enormous wholesale operation. (R)

7.00 **Winter Olympics – Today at the Games.** Clare Balding presents highlights of the second day's action from the 23rd staging of the Games, which takes place in PyeongChang, South Korea.

8.00 **South Korea: Earth's Hidden Wilderness.** Documentary exploring the wildlife, traditions and landscape in the country's rural areas, including footage of dolphins swimming alongside humans and a falconer flying a goshawk.

9.00 **Dragons' Den.** The panel assess the profit-making potential of selling advertising space on the move, a scheme for improving children's handwriting, and a motorcycle chain-tensioning product.

10.00 **The Mash Report.** Nish Kumar and a cast of comedy correspondents present the satirical and surreal take on the week's news. (R)

10.30 **Live at the Apollo.** Nish Kumar presents stand-up comedy from the Hammersmith Apollo in west London, introducing sets by Luisa Omelian and David O'Donerty. (R)

11.15 **Cleverman.** Koen's power and understanding grows as he spends time with Uncle Jimmy, while Waru discovers a dangerous creature and is led to a substance he believes can vanquish the Cleverman.

12.10 **Women's Six Nations Highlights.** **12.40** **Film:** The Deep. (2017) **2.05** Sign Zone: Question Time. (R) **3.05** Holly City. (R) **4.05** Weather for the Week Ahead. **4.10** BBC News.

ITV

6.00 CITV: Sooty. **6.10** Bottom Knockout Street. (R) **6.20** Bottom Knockout Street. (R) **6.35** Dino Dana. (R) **6.50** Super 4. (R) **7.00** Signed Stories: Share a Story. (R) **7.05** Marvel's Avengers: Ultron Revolution. **7.30** Scrambled! Scrambled! **7.35** Scrambled! The Tom and Jerry Show. (R) **7.50** Scrambled! Ben 10. (R) **8.10** Scrambled! Mr Bean: The Animated Series. (R) **8.30** Scrambled! Spy School. **9.05** Scrambled! Wishart. (R) **9.25** ITV News. **9.30** River Monsters. (R) **10.00** Peston on Sunday. **11.00** The Martin Lewis Money Show. (R) **11.25** The Voice UK. (R) **12.55** ITV News: Weather. **1.00** Britain's Best Walks with Julia Bradbury. (R) **1.30** What Would Your Kid Do? (R) **2.30** The Cruise: Return to the Mediterranean. (R) **3.30** Britain's Brightest Family. (R) **3.30** Tipping Point. (R) **4.30** Regional Programme: Weather. **4.40** ITV News: Weather. **5.00** The Celebrity Chase. (R)

6.00 **Dancing on Ice.** Love Week arrives at the rink, just in time for St Valentine's Day. Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean, Jason Gardiner and Ashley Banjo once more take their places on the judging panel, as Holly Willoughby and Philip Schofield welcome the eight remaining celebrities and their pro-skater partners back out onto the ice.

8.00 **Endeavour.** Oxford plays host to a veteran film star, in town to visit a local cinema. However, a mysterious death casts a sinister pall over the occasion, and offers the newly promoted DS Endeavour Morse a fresh case to pursue. Meanwhile, a family visit puts DCI Thursday's hospitality to the test. Inspector Morse prequel, starring Shaun Evans and Roger Allam.

10.00 **ITV News: Weather.**

10.10 **Peston on Sunday.** Political magazine, presented by Robert Peston and Allegra Stratton, featuring reports on the latest issues and interviews with topical guests. (R)

11.05 **Six Nations Highlights.** Action from the second round of the championship, featuring Ireland v Italy at the Aviva Stadium, England v Wales at Twickenham and Scotland v France at Murrayfield.

12.00 Next of Kin. (R) **1.35** Jackpot247. **3.00** Take on the Twisters. (R) **3.30** ITV Nightscreen. **5.05** The Jeremy Kyle Show. (R)

CHANNEL 4

6.15 The King of Queens. (R) **6.40** The King of Queens. (R) **7.05** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **7.30** Everybody Loves Raymond. (R) **8.00** Frasier. (R) **8.30** Frasier. (R) **9.00** Frasier. (R) **9.30** Sunday Brunch. **12.30** Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. (R) **1.35** The Simpsons. (R) **2.05** The Simpsons. (R) **2.35** **Film:** School of Rock. (2003) Comedy, starring Jack Black. **4.45** **Film:** Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer. (2007) Sci-fi adventure sequel, starring Ioan Gruffudd.

6.30 **Channel 4 News.**

7.00 **Posh Pawn.** The return of the programme offering an insight into the world of high-end pawnbroking. James takes a ride around London in an eye-catching supercar, with an aspiring fitness guru who's looking for £80,000. With her eyes on a round-the-world cruise costing £30,000, an adventurous retiree wants to sell a collection of handbags and jewellery. A car enthusiast contacts memorabilia expert Lawrence about a helmet that once belonged to land speed record-breaker Donald Campbell, and James faces a dilemma when he gets an offer for one of his favourite impulse buys. (R)

8.00 **Lost Pyramids of the Maya.** Documentary following a research project that has uncovered the ruins of an ancient hidden civilisation in the jungles of Central America.

9.00 **Film: Spy.** (2015) Premiere. A deskbound CIA agent provides valuable background support for a dashing secret agent, but has never gone into action herself. Everything changes, when the spy mysteriously vanishes, and she leaps into action to take his place, infiltrating the inner circle of a ruthless arms dealer and trying to avert a global catastrophe. Comedy adventure, starring Melissa McCarthy.

11.25 **Film: Friends with Benefits.** (2011) A recruiter sleeps with one of her client's staff, but keeping their feelings out of the arrangement proves tricky. Romantic comedy, starring Justin Timberlake and Mila Kunis.

1.25 The World's Most Expensive Food. (R) **2.20** The Superturk. (R) **3.15** Sarah Beeny's Four Rooms. (R) **4.10** Gillette World Sport. **4.35** KOTV Boxing Weekly. **5.05** Location, Location, Location. (R)

CHANNEL 5

6.00 Milkshake!: Little Princess. **6.10** Wissper. (R) **6.20** The Mr Men Show. (R) **6.30** Milkshake! Monkey. (R) **6.35** The Secret Life of Puppies. (R) **6.40** Moty. (R) **6.45** Simon. (R) **6.50** Simon. (R) **6.55** Peppa Pig. (R) **7.00** Paw Patrol. (R) **7.15** Thomas & Friends. (R) **7.25** Fireman Sam. (R) **7.35** Olly the Little White Van. (R) **7.45** Blaze and the Monster Machines. (R) **8.10** Paw Patrol. (R) **8.30** Nella the Princess Knight. (R) **8.45** Noddy: Toyland Detective. (R) **8.55** Ben and Holly's Little Kingdom. (R) **9.10** Shimmer and Shine. (R) **9.30** Digby Dragon. (R) **9.45** Peppa Pig. (R) **9.55** Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. (R) **10.25** Football on 5: The Championship. (R) **11.15** Football on 5: Goal Rush. (R) **11.45** Police Interceptors. (R) **12.45** **Film:** Over Her Dead Body. (2008) Supernatural romantic comedy, starring Eva Longoria. **2.30** **Film:** What to Expect When You're Expecting. (2012) Comedy drama, starring Cameron Diaz. **4.25** **5** News Weekend. **4.30** **Film:** Sleepless in Seattle. (1993) Romantic comedy, with Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan. **5.30** **5** News Update. **5.35** **Film:** Sleepless in Seattle. (1993) Concluded.

6.30 **Film: Along Came Polly.** (2004) An obsessive man's orderly routine is thrown into disarray when a wildly spontaneous old friend walks back into his life. Romantic comedy, with Ben Stiller and Jennifer Aniston. Edited for language and sexual content.

8.00 **Rom-Com LOL Special.** Iain Lee narrates a collection of internet videos featuring weddings. (R)

9.00 **Britain's Funniest Rom-Com.** As St Valentine's Day approaches, a selection of film stars, comedians and TV personalities revisit some of cinema's most memorable romantic comedies, via a top 40 list interspersed with personal accounts of first loves. Celebrating the unique way this particular genre gets audiences laughing and crying in equal measure, and among the actors sharing their thoughts on the films are Sleepless in Seattle's Rita Wilson, and Gregory's Girl star Clare Grogan.

11.55 **Film: There's Something About Mary.** (1998) A lovesick man hires a seedy detective to track down his high-school sweetheart. Comedy, starring Cameron Diaz.

2.10 SuperCasino. **4.00** Get Your Tatts Out: Kavos Ink. (R) **4.45** House Doctor. (R) **5.10** Great Scientists. (R) **5.35** Wildlife SOS. (R)

DIGITAL

BBC Four
7.00 Only Connect **7.30** University Challenge **8.00** Winter Olympics Extra **9.00** Horizon: Mars – A Traveller's Guide **10.00** The Sky at Night **10.30** **Film:** Mia Madre (2015) **12.15** Sinus Musicals **1.15** Horizon: Mars – A Traveller's Guide **2.15** Art, Passion & Power: The Story of the Royal Collection **3.15** Close

ITV2

12.00 Take Me Out **1.20** The Voice UK **2.50** **Film:** Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore (2010) **3.50** FYI Daily **3.55** **Film:** Cats & Dogs: The Revenge of Kitty Galore (2010) **4.35** **Film:** Despicable Me 2 (2013) **5.35** FYI Daily **5.40** **Film:** Despicable Me 2 (2013) **6.40** **Film:** Jurassic World (2015) **7.40** FYI Daily **7.45** **Film:** Jurassic World (2015) **9.00** Survival of the Fittest **10.30** Family Guy **12.00** American Dad! **12.55** The Cleveland Show **1.50** Totally Bonkers Guinness World Records **2.30** Teleshopping

ITV3

12.15 **Film:** Columbo: The Greenhouse Jungle (1972) **1.50** **Film:** Christie's Marple **3.50** The Durrells **6.00** Midsomer Murders **8.00** Paul O'Grady: For the Love of Dogs **9.00** Tonight at the London Palladium **10.00** Birds of a Feather **11.00** **Film:** Changeling (2008) **1.45** **Blue Murder** **3.00** George and Mildred **3.55** Road to Avonlea **5.40** **ITV3** Nightscreen

ITV4

11.45 Live Snooker Shoot-Out. Coverage of the afternoon session in the fourth and final day's play. **4.00** Pawn Stars **5.45** Live Snooker Shoot-Out. Further coverage of the fourth day's play at the single-frame tournament. **10.00** **Film:** Executive Decision (1996) **11.00** FYI Daily **11.05** **Film:** Executive Decision (1996) **12.45** Minder **2.35** **ITV4** Nightscreen **3.00** Teleshopping

E4

11.00 The Goldbergs **12.30** **Film:** Casper (1995) **2.30** The Big Bang Theory **7.00** **Film:** Men in Black (1997) **8.00** **Celebs Go Dating** **10.00** **Naked Attraction** **11.05** The Big Bang Theory **12.00** Gogglebox **1.00** **Celebs Go Dating** **2.05** **Naked Attraction** **3.00** First Dates Abroad **3.25** **ITV4** Nightscreen

Film4

11.00 The Great St Trinian's Train Robbery (1966) **1.00** Young Sherlock Holmes (1986) **3.10** The Hound of the Baskervilles (1959) **4.50** **ITV4** Nightscreen **5.00** Last Holiday (2006) **9.00** 13 Hours: The Secret Soldiers of Benghazi (2016) **11.50** Limitless (2011) **1.55** Enough Said (2013) **3.45** Close

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FILM CHOICES

MONDAY

The Deadly Twin, Channel 5, 3.20pm
Premiere. A woman springs into action after discovering that the twin brother of her daughter's boyfriend has escaped from a psychiatric institution intent on revenge. Thriller, starring Brigid Brannagh, Timothy Granaderos and Calista Carradine. (2017)

TUESDAY

Fatal Fiance, Channel 5, 3.15pm
A woman joins forces with a reporter to clear the name of her fiance, who has become the prime suspect in a murder case. However, not everything is as it seems. Thriller, starring Jenny Wade, Jordi Vilasuso and Taylor Cole. (2016)

WEDNESDAY

Water for Elephants, Channel 4, 1.25am
A veterinary student is left homeless and penniless after his parents' deaths during the Depression. He joins a travelling circus, applying his skills to caring for the animals, and falls in love with the possessive owner's wife as they tend an elephant together. Romantic drama based on Sara Gruen's novel, with Reese Witherspoon and Robert Pattinson. (2011)



Water for Elephants, Wednesday, Channel 4, 1.25am

THURSDAY

A Husband's Confession, Channel 5, 3.15pm
Preacher Evan Tanning's peaceful life as a radio parenting advisor is shattered when the son he never knew he had turns up on his doorstep, jeopardising his credibility ahead of the nationwide launch of his show. However, events take an even more catastrophic turn when Tanning's wayward teenage niece Jamie goes missing. Drama, starring JR Bourne and Allie Gonino. (2015)

FRIDAY

Magic Mike, Channel 4, 12.10am
A male stripper who is the star attraction in a nightclub teaches a talented young dancer the tricks of the trade, while also introducing him to his hedonistic world. The veteran performer falls for his protegee's sister, but finds his wild lifestyle comes between them. Steven Soderbergh's comedy drama, with Channing Tatum and Olivia Munn. (2012)

Perez has a new case to crack on an old murder

We know what you're thinking – not ANOTHER crime drama.

After all, TV isn't exactly short of them, whether they're home grown or being imported from the US or, as is more likely these days, Europe.

There's no wonder that the recent National Television Awards introduced a category dedicated to them – there are just so many being made these days.

Two of them have been inspired by the books of Ann Cleeves. Vera recently ended its more recent run on ITV, and now Shetland is back for its fourth series, two years on from its predecessor.

Although born and raised in England, Cleeves knows the place well, having lived there; she's currently living in Whitley Bay, close to where her Vera books are set.

Some fans have complained that the TV plots don't follow the exact pattern of her novels, but she's relaxed about that.

"The TV adaptations are very often very different – the scriptwriters

cut some characters and add others, cut big chunks of plot and sometimes they even change the murderer!," she laughs.

"But prose and film are different forms. Besides, the book stops being mine every time someone reads it. Each reader brings their own imagination, history and prejudice to the story and each writer has to learn to let go. Adaptation just takes the process a bit further."

One of the secrets of Shetland's success is its far north setting – the isles themselves are almost a character in their own right.

"I think the viewers are naturally drawn to the place, the setting and curious about what Shetland is like," explains Douglas Henshall, who plays the lead character, DI Jimmy Perez. "And, beyond the location, it's a well written drama which draws you in."

This time around, fans of the books don't need to worry about a favourite story being torn apart by a screenwriter, because this time, it's

a completely original tale that runs throughout the six-part series.

"David Kane has created a compelling and distinctive crime story told across six hours. We are also thrilled to have the brilliant core cast return," says executive producer Kate Bartlett.

Her colleague Gaynor Holmes adds: "Shetland has a loyal following and we're sure they will be thrilled with the surprises we've got for them this time around."

The plot focuses on local man Thomas Malone, who has spent the past 23 years behind bars after being found guilty of murdering teenager Lizzie Kilmuir. Malone has always protested his innocence, and when his conviction is eventually overturned, it's up to Perez and the team to find out what really happened to Lizzie.

Perez speaks to the original investigating officer, Drew McColl. Now retired, he has plenty to say about the case, and explains why, despite DNA evidence to the contrary, he still believes Malone is guilty.



Douglas Henshall stars in Shetland, Tuesday, BBC1, 9pm

BEST OF THE REST

MONDAY

Trauma, Channel 4, 9pm
New series. After a bad day at work, Dan Bowker arrives home drunk to discover that his 15-year-old son Alex has not come home and no-one knows where he is. Meanwhile, off-duty trauma surgeon Jon Allerton is at home celebrating his birthday when he is called into work to operate on Alex, who has been stabbed. When the medical team is unable to save Alex, Dan cannot let go of the idea that the surgeon is responsible for the death of his son. Thriller, starring Adrian Lester and John Simm, with Rowena King and Lyndsey Marshal

Julius Caesar Revealed

BBC1, 9pm
The classicist sets out on a quest to uncover the real Julius Caesar, challenging the received popular view of the Roman emperor. She looks at how he became the autocratic ruler of Rome, the tactics of his military campaigns, his use of spin and PR on his way to the top, and the reasons behind his assassination on the Ides of March in 44 BC. The scholar also examines his surprising legacy right up to the present day, revealing how his influence is still shaping language, politics and people's everyday lives.

TUESDAY

Flatpack Empire, Channel 4, 10pm
Cameras continue to roam the boardrooms and warehouses of one of Sweden's most successful exports since Abba. This week, one of IKEA's newest designers, Hanna-Kaarina Heikkila, wants to challenge mass production by creating an 'imperfect vase' that has the finger-marks of its creator. There's also a visit to the home of the Billy Bookcase to see what it takes to be a supplier for IKEA.

WEDNESDAY

Earth's Natural Wonders, Channel 4, 9pm
New series. Cameras explore some of the most breathtaking places on earth, following the lives of some of the people who call these extraordinary places home. In the first episode, cameras follow Yak-herder Thokmay Lowa as he leads his herd through one of the most treacherous mountain passes in the high Himalayas. Elsewhere, the programme follows members of Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic as they take part in the hazardous mussel

harvest, and people in Siberia searching for mammoth tusks, now released from the Siberian Permafrost after thousands of years.

Damned, Channel 4, 10pm
Channel 4 recently caused a stir with the acclaimed drama Kiri, especially over its portrayal of a social worker, played by Sarah Lancashire, who found herself in the firing line when a child in her care went missing. But that hasn't stopped the channel returning to the subject as Jo Brand's comedy about social workers is back for a second series. The run certainly feels topical as the team at Elm Heath find themselves dealing with a case of historic abuse. So, it's not a great time for Denise (Georgie Glenn) to bring Mimi (Lolly Adefope) into the fold, especially as newly single Al (Alan Davies) and a permanently stressed Rose (Brand) are too busy to mentor her.

Trauma, Monday, BBC1, 9pm

THURSDAY

Children Who Kill, Channel 4, 9pm
Juveniles found guilty of murder in the US are given life, with no chance of parole – a headline approach that in 2015 prompted the American Supreme Court to rule such sentences as 'unconstitutional'. With the system now under review, Susanna Reid travels to the US and talks to young killers about their crimes and life in jail. Susanna also meets the families of victims, to ask how they feel about a possible change to America's approach to juvenile sentencing.

FRIDAY

Requiem, Channel 4, 9pm
Aron Morgan lodges a complaint against Matilda for harassing Davey, and the police are unmoved by Matilda showing them what she believes is a clue to Carys' disappearance. Rose is pushed to breaking point as old wounds are reopened, Ed gets jittery as Trudy gives him the cold shoulder, and Graves becomes increasingly suspicious that he's hiding something. Sylvia reveals the peculiar ancestry of the Dean family. Hal identifies the source of the eerie music on the audiotapes, and Trudy remembers a crucial detail about the day Carys vanished. Psychological thriller, starring Lydia Wilson.

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No.466

Each number in the grid represents a different letter of the alphabet and every letter of the alphabet is used. Use the given letter(s) to the right of the main grid to start you off.

21	26	14	12	10	3		1	18	25	9	26	4	
	14		18		8		18		18			24	
	10		3	8	15	14	8	6	21	11	6	7	
9	26	8	22		14		25		14			19	
	11		8		11		25		6			14	
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21				6		8		21		11	9	21	19
22	6		11	7	19	9	19	24	24	23			11
25				9		14		21		25			25
4	18	21	19	9	3			24	17	4	7	8	6

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
K	T	F	J	P	Y	B	A	Z	L	E	U	V
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
X	S	M	W	C	D	H	Q	G	I	N	O	R

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

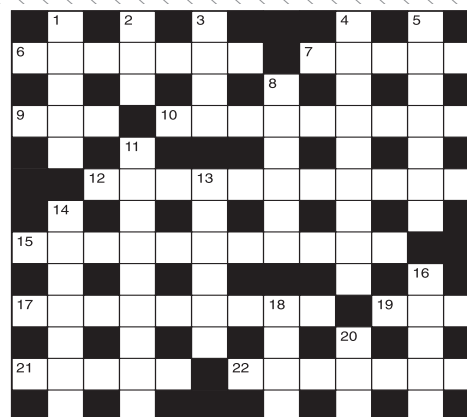
Cryptic Clues:

Across

6. Keeps earth-bound for certain reason (7)
7. Topless figure with a tan? (5)
- 9 & 19Ac. Vegetable to decay at the back of the vehicle (6)
10. Decree one should be encircled by heavy artillery (9)
12. One man went to mow! (11)
15. Where a man keeps his capital and his secrets! (5,3,3)
17. Could it show the force of a testament? (9)
19. See 9 Across.
21. What directors do for the farm animal (5)
22. Uneasiness if sea-mail goes astray (7)

Down

- 1 & 16Dn. Retarding mechanism faulty, we hear - manage to escape (5,5)
2. See 20 Down
3. German flower produces a certain fragrance, one hears! (4)
4. I'm having a preference for being unbiased (9)
5. See 13 Down.
8. America is after the record for this event (6)
11. Hospital attendants in whom discipline reposes (9)
- 13 & 5Dn. Pedagogue chose the carol, maybe (6,7)
14. Yet an altercation about a football team causes concern (7)
16. See 1 Down
18. Angela Nolan could show impetuosity (4)
- 20 & 2Dn. Display to put down in the open air (6)



Quick Clues:

Across

6. Pagan (7)
7. Faithful (5)
9. Grow older (3)
10. Indiscreet (9)
12. Of inferior quality (6-5)
15. Foot soldiers (11)
17. Unceasing (9)
19. Snoop (3)
21. Sharp (5)
22. Amaze (7)

Down

1. Simulate (5)
2. Pig pen (3)
3. Judge (4)
4. Venetian boatman (9)
5. Serious (7)
8. Weekday (6)
11. Lay waste (9)
13. Trip (6)
14. Bill (7)
16. Salt water (5)
18. Too (4)
20. Decay (3)

	4		5			2	
				1	4		
3		6			9	8	1
7		8		5			3
			4		2		
4	9			8			7
		5		4			8
	8		1	3		2	
	1				7		6

Fill in the grid above so that every column, every row and each of the 3x3 boxes contains all the digits from 1 to 9.

LAST WEEK'S SOLUTIONS >

2	1	6	4	3	8	5	9	7
4	9	8	5	6	7	3	2	1
3	7	5	1	2	9	6	8	4
5	8	2	3	9	4	1	7	6
7	4	9	8	1	6	2	5	3
6	3	1	2	7	5	8	4	9
1	2	7	9	5	3	4	6	8
8	6	3	7	4	2	9	1	5
9	5	4	6	8	1	7	3	2

LAST WEEK'S CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:
 CRYPTIC - Across: 7 Bare necessity; 8 Idolatry;
 9 Emma; 10 Tender; 12 Letter; 14 Writer;
 16 Strips; 18 Idle; 20 Transact; 22 Carried the
 day. Down: 1 Landseer; 2 Sealed; 3 Beat;
 4 Recycles; 5 Ascent; 6 Stem; 11 Rarities;
 13 Especial; 15 Theory; 17 Rasped; 19 Dead;
 21 Acts.
 QUICK - Across: 7 Reprehensible;
 8 Composer; 9 Gone; 10 Frolic; 12 Preach;
 14 Niece; 16 Decent; 18 Epic; 20 Inwardly;
 22 Comprehensive; 24 Pope; Devoured;
 2 Propel; 3 Thus; 4 Intrepid; 5 Single; 6 Plan;
 11 Consider; 13 Conclude; 15 Occupy;
 17 Caress; 19 Poor; 21 Weep.

1. What was the first Viscount Montgomery of Alamein's first name?
2. Which post did David Owen hold in the Labour Government from 1977-1979?
3. The best-known form of which game is called 8-ball?
4. Which actor played Lord Bellamy in *Upstairs, Downstairs*?
5. Which condition was also called the king's evil?

6. Which comic actor's first talking film was *Monsieur Verdoux*?
7. What, in 1959, became the City of London's first new theatre in 200 years?
8. What is the name of the 2-day holiday at the start of the Jewish New Year?
9. Who was Queen Elizabeth II's father?
10. Which partnership wrote *My Fair Lady* and *Paint Your Wagon*?

Last week's solutions:

Quiz: 1 Ostrogoths; 2 Letchworth; 3 Seraphim;
4 TS Eliot; 5 Campbells; 6 Westminster Abbey;
7 Fungus; 8 Napalm; 9 Oxford; 10 Loganberry.

Each number from 1 to 9 represents a different letter. Solve the clues and insert the letters in the appropriate squares to discover a word which uses all nine letters.

8628945
37651
87631

gives a game,
gives a second game,
gives a third game.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

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Pub's cooking up a real storm

With the recent conditions making driving a risk-taking exercise of the highest degree, you want to find some good grub at the end of your quest to make that risk worthwhile.

Outside left you feeling like Jack Frost himself was running his prickly tongue all over your face, so having something hot and good-tasting in your belly was a terrific tonic.

It was a bonus, then, that the venue itself and staff working within the fairly recently opened Cookhouse & Pub offered the same warmth and friendliness as the food.

We had actually tried to go the night before. But, of course, it's a busy time of year and everyone would be out with friends or co-workers. . . and we hadn't booked. On top of this, they had lost the heaters in one half of the restaurant so were running on a smaller capacity. The staff were very apologetic saying sorry for the wait for tables and trying to fit in an alternative for another night if we didn't have time to wait.

BOOTHS

We took up the offer of a table the next evening and, based on our brief dealings with the staff so far, signs were good that this place had potential. So, 24 hours later it was take two. The restaurant was back up to full capacity and judging by the warmth swirling around the venue they had their heating back on in all corners.

Again we had service with a smile, one of the sizeable booths at the back of the venue giving a bit of privacy to our meal and we were seated near the kitchen to be enticed by the smells floating out from within.

Of note here is the attention given to those who choose to dine alone. Situated next to a Premier Inn on the A4123 Wolverhampton Road in Oldbury – one of the main routes between the M5 and Wolverhampton city

Garlic and chilli prawns, and Moroccan lamb



Modern art – inside the decor is stylish



centre – they must undoubtedly get a lot of business trippers with laptop in tow looking to get a bit of prep done over a good bit of food.

To cater for that, they have comfortable looking 'solo seats' with a large enough table to accommodate plate and 'puter with plugs and adjustable lamps to boot. We hadn't seen this idea before, except perhaps for in London, so the idea was rather novel to us.

First thing was to treat the tastebuds with a starter. We were able to make our selections pretty quickly – one of us pregnant and with a constant hankering for

meat, while the other just overweight and with a greedy yearning for everything fattening.

I had the Moroccan-style lamb koftas, which sat on a plush bed of hummus and mint with fresh pomegranate seeds topped with Middle Eastern spices. The other half had the honey and mustard pork chipolatas with chopped parsley.

We had both picked our mains off the specials board. I had the special mixed grill, which differed from the regular option with the inclusion of tender, delicious ribs that peeled off the bone with ease.

As for the other half, she had the special lamb ragu which was sweetened nicely and came with a healthy side portion of garlic ciabatta.

This time I opted for the salted caramel, brownie and popcorn sundae but my girlfriend decided liquid was the way forward and had a C&P hot chocolate made with C&P mini chocolate beans, a giant marshmallow and whipped cream on top.

Too soon it was bedtime. And a mental note was added to come back soon with family and friends.

LEIGH SANDERS

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Motown the Musical

If ever a musical genre lent itself to theatre, it was the mass harmonics and wall-of-sound dramatics of Motown. Motown the Musical is the story of Berry Gordy, a former Detroit car-worker living in an America riven by race riots, who scraped together a shoestring budget in 1959 to found a record label which became its own assembly-line of sensational hits.

Featuring 40 classic songs including My Girl, Stop! In The Name of Love, Dancing in the Street, I Heard It Through The Grapevine and Ain't No Mountain High Enough, this production won't disappoint.

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- ✓ Return coach travel
- ✓ 1 night DBB at a selected hotel, Heathrow area
- ✓ Motown the Musical theatre ticket - Grand Circle (matinee performance)
- ✓ Free time in London



★★★★

"A lavish, slick, song-crammed show"

Dominic Cavendish, The Telegraph

The Phantom of the Opera

The Phantom of the Opera traces the tragic love story of a beautiful opera singer and a young composer shamed by his physical appearance into a shadowy existence beneath the majestic Paris Opera House. The combination of opulent sets, beautiful costumes and fabulous special effects creates a theatrical experience not to be missed.

The longest running show in Broadway history, second-longest running in West End history, and winner of over 70 awards including 3 Oliviers, 7 Tonys, 7 Drama Desk awards and many more, The Phantom of the Opera has been seen by 130 million people in 145 cities in 27 countries.

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Departing Saturday 7 Apr

from Cannock, Walsall & Wolverhampton

Price Includes...

- ✓ Return coach travel
- ✓ 1 night DBB at a selected hotel, Heathrow area
- ✓ The Phantom of the Opera theatre ticket - Grand Circle (matinee performance)
- ✓ Free time in London



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Sunday Express

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on this package and date



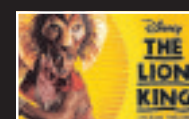
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Omega Holidays cannot be held responsible for the non-appearance of a particular actor/actress; no refunds will be given in this event. Whilst we always try to ensure that parties are seated together, very occasionally, it may be necessary for parties to be split. Couples are always seated together. Tours offered subject to availability. Errors and omissions excepted. Prices shown are per person, based on two people sharing a dbl/twin room. Single supplements apply.

PROPERTY

YOUR WEEKLY
GUIDE TO HOME
BUYING AND
LETTING

31
The Chronicle Thursday, February 8, 2018

Family home in a popular area close to all amenities

This very well-presented detached family home in Field Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, lies in a popular area, close to local amenities, shops and schools.

It is for sale through Webbs estate agents at £229,950.

Its accommodation briefly comprises an entrance hallway, a lounge, a dining room, a conservatory, a kitchen, a utility room and a guest WC to the ground floor. To the first floor there are four bedrooms with an en-suite to the master and a family bathroom. Outside there is a generous driveway, an integral garage and private landscaped gardens.

In more detail the entrance hallway has stairs off to the first floor. The lounge has a bay window to the front, a feature fireplace with a gas fire and doors to the dining room and kitchen. The dining room has patio doors to the conservatory, which in turn has French doors to the garden.

Positioned to the rear of the property, the kitchen/diner has wall, base and drawer units, a work surface over, an integral oven, a hob with an extractor hood over, an integrated dishwasher, ample appliance space and a door to the utility room. This has a sink, a range of units, ample appliance space and a door to the guest WC.

Upstairs the landing has doors to the generous master bedroom which is positioned to the front, plus a range of fitted wardrobes and a door to the en-suite shower room. Bedroom two is positioned to the rear, bedroom three is positioned to the front and bedroom four is positioned to the rear.

The family bathroom is positioned to the rear of the home. It has a suite comprising a panelled bath with an overhead shower, low level WC and a vanity unit incorporating a sink.

Outside, the garage has an up and over door, power and lighting. The rear garden has a paved patio area, is mainly laid to lawn with well stocked borders and mature bedding areas. This space is fully enclosed with panel fencing and has a gated access.

Established and trusted since 1994, Webbs Estate Agents is an independently owned family business built on reputation and service. Their experienced sales team offer expertise gained from extensive market knowledge.

BLOXWICH £229,950



TO VIEW THIS PROPERTY

AGENT: Webbs Estate Agents

TEL: 01922 663399

EMAIL: sales@webbsestateagents.co.uk

KEY FEATURES

Detached family home

Well-presented

4 bedrooms

Popular location

Close to amenities



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Spacious property

BLOXWICH
£300,000

This detached family home in Baslow Road, Bloxwich, has scope for extension and improvement.

Set in a highly desirable area, it is for sale through Goodchilds Estate Agents at £300,000 with no chain.

This spacious detached residence is close to amenities in Bloxwich High Street, the Walsall Academy and Bloxwich Golf Course.

Set on a generous plot of land with front and rear gardens, the property also benefits from off-road parking, part gas central heating and double glazing.

In more detail the entrance hallway has two storage cupboards and stairs off. The main lounge has a large bow window to the front. The dining room has a window to the rear. The kitchen has ample storage units, a breakfast bar, a useful pantry cupboard and lovely views across the rear garden. The utility room has space for appliances, a Belfast sink and a door to the lobby accessing the WC, the rear garden and the garage.

For further information, or to book a viewing, contact Goodchilds on 01922 405699.

Well-presented detached home in cul-de-sac has been improved

WALSALL
£189,950

>>>

This immaculately presented detached home in Selsdon Road, Walsall, lies at the head of a quiet cul-de-sac on a sought-after development, known as Turnberry.

It is for sale through Marrion & Co Estate Agents at £189,950.

With gas central heating and gold oak double glazing, it has an enclosed storm porch, entrance hall/stairs, a front lounge, a rear dining kitchen, a conservatory, two excellent bedrooms, the master having built-in wardrobes, a fully tiled shower room, a garage/carport and landscaped gardens.

The property has been significantly improved, with replacement kitchen and bathroom fittings, double glazing and a modern central heating and boiler. Early internal inspection is therefore highly recommended in order to fully appreciate the standard of internal appointments.

Call 01922 404446.



SDL AUCTIONS
BIGWOOD

15TH FEBRUARY
Aston Villa Football Ground
Starting at 10:30am

AUCTION

154 LOTS

To include properties on behalf of:
Plus properties on behalf of Receivers/Housing Associations



56 Willingsworth Rd, Wednesbury
3 Bed End Terraced House
Guide: **£65,000+ (plus fees)**



59 Dovedale Avenue, Willenhall
3 Bed Semi-Detached House
Guide: **£75,000+ (plus fees)**



1 Rosemary Avenue, Bilston
3 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: **£19,000-£24,000 (plus fees)**



22 Richard Williams Rd, Wednesbury
3 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: **£19,000-£24,000 (plus fees)**



12 Wolverley Avenue, Warstones
3 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: **£69,000-£74,000 (plus fees)**



Athlone, Angela Place, Bilston
3 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: **£45,000+ (plus fees)**



210 Jockey Road, Sutton Coldfield
4 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: **£195,000+ (plus fees)**



24 Galbraith Close, Bilston
3 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: **£39,000-£44,000 (plus fees)**



91 Addenbrooke St, Wednesbury
3 Bed Semi Detached House
Guide: **£75,000+ (plus fees)**



46 Arnside Court, Brookvale Village, Erdington
2 Bed Ground Floor Flat
Guide: **£73,000+ (plus fees)**

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Each property is subject to a Reserve Price which would ordinarily be within + or - 10% of the quoted Guide Price. Therefore the property may not be able to be purchased at the quoted Guide Price. Both Guide and Reserve Prices can be subject to change up to and including the day of the auction. For a full explanation go to www.sdlauctions.co.uk/glossary. All Guide Prices are subject to additional non-optional fees, including the buyers administration fee. For the Energy Performance Rating of each property please refer to the legal pack, our catalogue or website. Please contact our office for further details or advice.

SDL AUCTIONS**BIGWOOD****15TH FEBRUARY**Aston Villa Football Ground
Starting at 10:30am**AUCTION**
154 lots to include

View: 7/2 @ 12.15; 12/2 @ 13.15 & 14/2 @ 12.15

**34 Argyle Road, Wolverhampton**
3 bed mid terraced house
Guide: £19,000 - £24,000
(plus fees)

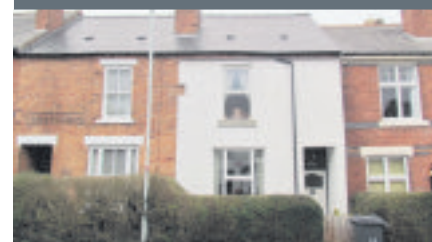
View: 7/2 @ 13.15; 12/2 @ 12.15 & 14/2 @ 13.15

**Lower Villiers St, Wolverhampton**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £49,000 - £54,000
(plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 13.30; 10/2 @ 13.30; 12/2 @ 12.15 & 14/2 @ 13.30

**Cavendish Gds, Wolverhampton**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £39,000 - £44,000
(plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 14.45; 12/2 @ 10.45 & 14/2 @ 14.45

**46 Limes Road, Tettenhall**
3 bed mid terraced house
Guide: £50,000+
(plus fees)

View: 10/2 @ 10.00; 12/2 @ 15.45 & 14/2 @ 10.00

**11 Beakes Road, Bearwood**
4 bed mid terraced house
Guide: £50,000+
(plus fees)

View: 10/2 @ 15.45; 12/2 @ 10.00 & 14/2 @ 15.45

**107 Grosvenor Road, Handsworth**
3 bed detached house
Guide: £50,000+ (plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 12.45; 12/2 @ 12.45 & 14/2 @ 12.45

**34 Fowler St, Wolverhampton**
2/3 bed semi detached bungalow
Guide: £29,000 - £34,000
(plus fees)

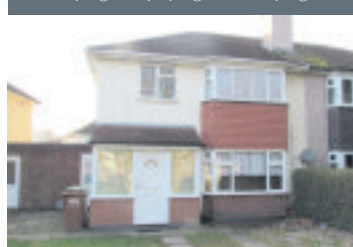
View: 10/2 @ 11.00; 12/2 @ 14.45 & 14/2 @ 11.00

**105 Bunns Lane, Dudley**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £69,000 - £74,000
(plus fees)

View: 10/2 @ 12.15; 12/2 @ 13.30 & 14/2 @ 12.15

**123 Ivyhouse Lane, Coseley**
2 bed mid terraced house
Guide: £19,000-£24,000
(plus fees)

View: 10/2 @ 14.15; 12/2 @ 11.30 & 14/2 @ 14.15

**173 Great Bridge Road, Bilston**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £29,000 - £34,000
(plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 11.45; 12/2 @ 13.45 & 14/2 @ 11.45

**Longdon Avenue, Goldthorn Park**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £79,000 - £84,000
(plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 10.00; 12/2 @ 15.30 & 14/2 @ 10.00

**89 Blackhalve Lane, Wednesfield**
2 bed mid terraced house
Guide: £19,000 - £24,000
(plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 15.30; 12/2 @ 10.00 & 14/2 @ 15.30

**369 Stafford Road, Wolverhampton**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £50,000+ (plus fees)

View: 10/2 @ 11.45; 12/2 @ 14.00 & 14/2 @ 11.45

**24 Galbraith Close, Bilston**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £39,000 - £44,000
(plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 14.00; 12/2 @ 11.30 & 14/2 @ 14.00

**12 Wolverley Avenue, Penn**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £69,000 - £74,000
(plus fees)

View: 10/2 @ 15.00; 12/2 @ 10.45 & 14/2 @ 15.00

**2 Cygnet Road, West Bromwich**
2 bed semi detached house
Guide: £39,000 - £44,000
(plus fees)

View: 10/2 @ 12.45; 12/2 @ 13.00 & 14/2 @ 12.45

**1A Woodcross Lane, Wolverhampton**
4 bed semi detached house
Guide: £50,000+ (plus fees)

View: 7/2 @ 11.00; 12/2 @ 14.30 & 14/2 @ 11.00

**3 Giffard Road, Wolverhampton**
3 bed semi detached house
Guide: £39,000 - £44,000
(plus fees)

View by appointment with the auctioneer

**Malcolm Court, Wolverhampton**
Current gross income: £4,500 pa
Guide: £29,000 - £34,000
(plus fees)

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@SDLBigwood

Please note charges may apply in addition to the purchase price. Any additional fees will be confirmed in the legal pack which can be downloaded from our website, inspected at our offices or in the auction room before bidding. For a definition of Guide Price & Reserve Price please refer to our catalogue or website. For the Energy Performance Rating of each property please refer to the legal pack, our catalogue or website. Please contact our office for further details or advice.

K.Stuart Swash

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PROPERTY



Modern semi would make an ideal first home

This lovely modern semi-detached home in Field Road, Bloxwich, Walsall, has one year remaining on its new build guarantee.

Being well presented, it is for sale through Webbs Estate Agents at £124,950.

An ideal starter home, situated in a popular location, the property is close to all local amenities, including shops and schools.

Its accommodation briefly consists of a lounge, a breakfast kitchen, a

BLOXWICH
£124,950

guest WC, two double bedrooms and a bathroom. Outside, there is a private driveway, landscaped gardens and further gated parking to rear.

In more detail the lounge has a window to the front, a wall-mounted feature fireplace with a gas fire inset, stairs to first floor and a door to the

kitchen. The breakfast kitchen itself has a window to the rear, wall, base and drawer units, a work surface over, an inset single drainer sink, an inset oven, hob with an extractor hood over, a breakfast bar, a door to the garden and a door to the WC.

The guest WC completes the ground floor.

Contact Webbs estate agents on 01922 66 33 99 or visit their website www.webbsestateagents.co.uk

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DEFINITION OF RESERVE PRICE

The reserve price is the seller's minimum acceptable price at auction and the figure below which the auctioneer cannot sell. It is usual, but not always the case that a provisional reserve is agreed between the seller and the auctioneer at the start of marketing and the Final Reserve Price will be agreed between the auctioneer and the seller prior to the auction sale. Whilst the reserve price is confidential it will usually be set within the quoted guide range and in any event will not exceed the highest quoted guide price.

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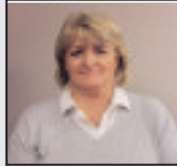
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GUIDE PRICE £49,000 - £59,000 (+ FEES)



Paul Marrion - Partner



Kathy Marrion - Partner

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Energy Rating - C

NEW



**Buxton Close
Lower Farm**

- Mid Terrace House
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms
- Fore and Rear Gardens
- Bathroom/WC
- VIEWING ESSENTIAL

£130,000

Park Home

NEW



**Lodgefield Park
Stafford**

- Well Maintained Park Home
- Being for the Over 55's
- Electric Heating, Hallway
- Lounge/Dining Room
- Fitted Kitchen, Utility Area
- 2 Double Bedrooms, En-Suite
- Family Bathroom
- Parking, Gardens

£100,000

Energy Rating - TBC

NEW



**Mulberry Road
Bloxwich**

- Modern Full Re-furbished Semi-Detached
- Gas Central Heating, Double Glazing
- Lounge/Dining Room
- Conservatory
- Extended Re-Fitted Kitchen
- 3 Bedrooms, Bathroom
- Parking
- Brick Built Work Shop

£150,000

Energy Rating - E

NEW



**Broad Lane
Bloxwich**

- Victorian end town house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- 2 reception rooms, kitchen
- 2 bedrooms
- bathroom/WC
- Low maintenance garden
- Detached garage to rear

£115,000

Energy Rating - TBC

NEW



**Nursery Road
Bloxwich**

- Traditional Semi-Detached House
- PVCu double glazing and gas central heating.
- Front Lounge,
- Rear Kitchen/Diner
- 3 Bedrooms
- Shower Room/wc
- Off Road Parking, Rear Garden.
- SORRY NO DSS, PETS OR SMOKERS

£575

Energy Rating - TBC

NEW



**Chepstow Road
Walsall**

- Mid terraced House
- In need of refurbishment
- PVCu Double Glazing
- Front Lounge
- Rear Kitchen/Diner
- Three Bedrooms
- Bathroom, Downstairs WC
- Rear Garden with potential for off road parking

£74,950

Energy Rating - D

NEW



**Birkdale Road
Turnberry**

- Modern Detached Family Home
- PVCu Double Glazing
- Gas Central Heating
- Four Bedrooms (Master with En-suite)
- Front Lounge
- Rear Dining Room
- Re-Fitted Kitchen, Utility Room
- Family Bathroom

£295,000

Energy Rating - TBC

NEW



**Mallory Crescent
Bloxwich**

- Semi-Detached family home
- Double Glazing
- Gas Central Heating
- Front Lounge
- Rear Dining Room, Kitchen
- Three Bedrooms, Bathroom
- Driveway, Rear Garden
- NO ONWARD CHAIN

£128,000

Energy Rating - C



**Avon Road
Blakenall**

- End terrace house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, conservatory, kitchen
- 3 bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Driveway parking
- Bathroom/WC
- Gardens

£130,000

Energy Rating - D



**Gurnard Close
Coppice Farm**

- Semi detached house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, kitchen
- 2 bedrooms, bathroom/WC
- Garage
- Driveway
- Gardens

£150,000

Energy Rating - B



**Penmire Grove
Walsall**

- Three Storey Town House
- PVCu double glazing & Gas Central Heating
- Fitted Kitchen
- Rear Lounge/Diner
- Three excellent sized Bedrooms
- (master with en-suite)
- Family Bathroom
- Rear Garden

£185,000

Energy Rating - D



**Selsdon Road
Turnberry**

- Detached house
- Gas centrally heated
- PVCu double glazed
- Lounge, kitchen, conservatory
- 2 bedrooms, shower room/WC
- Garage, carport
- Driveway
- Gardens

£189,950

Energy Rating - D



**Long Lane
Great Wyrley**

- Traditional extended semi detached House
- Four Bedrooms
- Spacious Lounge, Dining Room
- Breakfast Kitchen
- Conservatory, Utility Room
- Downstairs W.C.
- Family Bathroom, Driveway, Small Garage Rear Garde
- No Onward Chain

£224,950

Energy Rating - E



**Beechwood Close
Bloxwich**

- Detached House
- Gas Centrally Heated & PVCu Double Glazed
- L Shaped Lounge/ Dining Room
- Kitchen
- Three Bedrooms
- Garage
- Rear Garden
- No Onward Chain

£309,950

Energy Rating - C



**Bealeys Close
Bloxwich**

- Modern Detached Family Home
- Gas Central Heating, PVCu Double Glazing
- Lounge, Dining Room, Study
- Fitted Breakfast Kitchen, Utility Room, Conservatory
- Four Bedrooms
- Ensuite Bathroom
- Family Bathroom, Detached Double Garage
- Driveway
- Private Rear Garden

£320,000

Energy Rating - E



**Stoney Lane
Bloxwich**

- Traditional Detached Home
- Gas Central Heating, Double Glazed (W/S)
- Rear Lounge, Front Dining Room
- Family Room, Kitchen
- Conservatory, Guest WC
- 3 Bedrooms, Bathroom
- Garage, Large Driveway
- Mature Gardens

£365,000

Energy Rating - D



**Paddock Gardens
Walsall**

- Modern Detached Family Home
- Three Reception Rooms, Kitchen
- Family Bathroom
- Double Garage
- 5 Bedrooms, Master with en-suite
- Dribeway
- Large Rear Garden

£600,000

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Par Court, Bloxwich

- Impressive Detached Family Home
- Five Bedrooms
- Open Plan Living Space
- Upgraded Fixtures & Fittings
- Granite Kitchen Worktops
- Excellent Energy Efficiency Rating (B-84)

£439,950



Ferndown Close, Turnberry Estate

- Four Bedroom Detached Property
- Secluded Cul-de-Sac Location
- Four Good Sized Bedrooms
- Potential to Extend (STPP)
- Double Garage
- EPC - TBC

£340,000



Ragstone Close, Reedswood

- 'THE HAREWOOD' By Cala Homes
- 'Reedswood Place' Built in 2009
- Open Plan Kitchen/Diner
- Five Double Bedrooms
- High Specification Fixtures & Fittings
- EPC Rating- B 81

£295,000



Griffins Crescent, Walsall

- 'The Kingsford' Design by Taylor Wimpey
- Popular Saddlers Brook Development
- Three Bedroom Semi Detached
- Easy Access to Local Towns and the M6
- Granite Tiled Flooring in Hall & Kitchen
- EPC - C 79

£190,000



Lichfield Road, Bloxwich

- Traditional Detached Property
- Extended Kitchen
- Two Reception Rooms
- Rear Workshop
- Three Bedrooms
- EPC - TBC

£190,000



Baslow Road, Bloxwich

- Detached Family Home
- Scope For Extension & Improvements (STPP)
- Highly Desirable Area
- Three Bedrooms
- Utility Room
- Garage
- Off Road Parking
- No Upward Chain
- EPC - TBC

Offers Invited £300,000



Usk Close, Bloxwich

- Well Presented Semi-Detached
- Cul-de-Sac Location
- Driveway for Two Cars
- Ground Floor WC
- Fitted Breakfast Kitchen
- EPC - C 68

£140,000



Bentley Lane, Reedswood

- Detached Three Storey House
- Two Reception Rooms
- Extended Breakfast Kitchen
- Three Good Sized Bedrooms
- Large Family Bathroom
- GCH & DG
- Off Road Parking
- M6 Motorway Easily Accessible
- No Chain
- EPC - TBC

£189,950



Odell Crescent, Leamore

- Beautifully Presented End of Terrace
- Contemporary Style Decor
- Superb High Gloss Kitchen
- Laundry Room and Side Covered Access
- Two Double Bedrooms
- Elegant Bathroom Suite
- Gas Central Heating
- Double Glazing
- Off Road Parking
- EPC - C 70

£140,000



Astbury Close, Turnberry Estate

- Two Bedroom Mid Terrace
- Ideal First Time Buy
- Close to Bloxwich Train Station
- Ample Off Road Parking
- No Upward Chain
- EPC - C 70

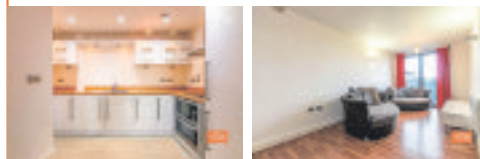
£135,000



Portsea Street, Leamore

- Extended Semi-Detached House
- Lounge, Dining Area & Extended Kitchen
- Ground Floor WC
- Two Double Bedrooms
- Gas Central Heating
- Very Low Energy Bills (EPC Rating B-90)

£115,000



Smiths Flour Mill, Walsall

- Gated Smiths Flour Mill Development
- Secure Gated Entrance
- Allocated Parking Space
- Close to Walsall Town Centre
- Two Bedroom Upper Floor Apartment
- Electric heating
- Must Be Viewed
- No Chain
- Ideal First Time Purchase
- EPC - TBC

£110,000



Chantry Avenue, Bloxwich

- Extended Semi-Detached Property
- Extended Kitchen/Diner
- Conservatory
- Ground Floor Bathroom
- Three Double Bedrooms
- EPC - TBC

GUIDE £91,000



Wenlock Gardens, Leamore

- Two Bedroom Semi-Detached House
- Lounge with French Doors
- Fitted Kitchen
- Ground Floor WC
- Gas Central Heating
- EPC - D 68

£110,000



Clarendon Street, Bloxwich

- Well Presented Period Style Property
- Two Reception Rooms
- Gas Central Heating
- Double Glazing
- Three Bedrooms
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"Service you expect from the Agent that delivers"

Well-built and good range of engines

By Carmel Stewart

Staying well on trend, Skoda has added a second SUV to its range. The new Karoq follows closely in the tyre tracks of the larger Kodiah which has sold very well since its launch a few months ago and has attracted slightly younger buyers than is the norm for Skoda.

It is hoped the new family-sized Karoq, which effectively replaces the outgoing Yeti, will lower that demographic still further.

Built on the VW MQB platform which also accounts for the SEAT Ateca and the VW Tiguan, it enters into a highly competitive sector into which pretty well every manufacturer has eased its own SUV. Not surprising when you consider that, while overall new car sales are down, this particular sector is up 11per cent.

Unlike the Kodiah, which has a seven-seat option, the aerodynamically styled Karoq is confined to five supportive seats, housed in a well-built, comfortable cabin with decent leg and head room all-round, albeit with a transmission tunnel for those middle feet.

The dash is clear and uncluttered and the sat nav excellent. Rear seat passengers have tray table as standard for those essential snacks. The boot is a fair size at 521litres which expands to 1,630 litres with the rear seat backs flat.

Engines are of the tried and tested variety and range from the 1.0litre, 115ps, three-cylinder petrol to the 2.0litre 150ps four-cylinder diesel.

The feisty 1.5litre 150ps petrol, which has been tweaked slightly for the Karoq, is expected to be the best seller. It packs a fair punch and showed an excellent turn of speed



The boot is 521litres and 1,630 litres with rear seats flat



Rear seat passengers have tray table as standard

on request. In addition, there are two diesel engines available – a 1.6litre, 115ps and a 2.0litre 150ps which has the added attraction of being available with four-wheel-drive.

If your load lugging is occasional rather than frequent, the 1.0 litre three-cylinder will suffice, being more powerful than you might suppose and returning an average 52.3mpg.

The diesel units are inevitably the most economical with the red rosette going to the 1.6litre TDI which returns an official average of 61.4mpg.

Transmissions vary from the wonderful seven-speed DSG, which is hard to fault, to the excellent notchy six-speed manual – neither will present any problems.

In fact, no aspect of the new Karoq will present any problems – except to the sales person, for the SUV market is now so crowded that it is difficult to single out any single model as the best of what is a very good bunch.

The new Karoq is as well placed as any. It is well-built, has a good range of engines and a generous standard spec and the starting

price of £20,875.00 is on a par with its rivals.

Standard SE spec includes 17-inch Ration alloys, privacy glass, LED rear lights, dual-zone climate control, DAB radio, Bluetooth, front assist, pedestrian monitor and driver fatigue sensor.

SE L models are priced from £23,165 and add 18-inch Braga alloys, Amundsen satellite navigation with eight-inch touchscreen display, Smartlink+, keyless entry and start/stop, full LED headlights with adaptive front light system, heated front seats, and Alcantara

upholstery, rear view camera and front and rear parking sensors.

The range-topping Edition trim comes with 19-inch Crater alloys, panoramic sunroof, metallic paint and leather upholstery as standard. Columbus satellite navigation with 9.2-inch touchscreen display and gesture control, electrically operated boot and LED ambient lighting are also included along with lane assist, blind spot protection with rear traffic alert, traffic sign recognition and a price tag of £27,110.



The Karoq follows closely in the tracks of the larger Kodiah which has sold very well since its launch a few months ago

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Brendon Batson reads out his tribute



A picture of Cyrille, a Baggies shirt and his trademark cap



One-time Villa forward Dwight Yorke



Ex-boss at Albion and Villa Ron Atkinson



Tears from fans at the memorial service



Adrian Chiles among the mourners



Former Villa striker Dion Dublin



Beverley Knight performs during the memorial service for Cyrille Regis

Phenomenal footballer – and an even better man

STARS paid tribute to footballing 'pioneer' Cyrille Regis at an emotional service, describing him as 'a superstar of the day, but a man of the people'.

At the service at The Hawthorns dedicated to his remarkable life, it was not just Cyrille's prowess on the pitch that was hailed. His humility and grace as a man was also celebrated.

Regis was described by his former boss Ron Atkinson as 'a phenomenal footballer and an even better bloke'. Former Liverpool and England star John Barnes called Cyrille 'an ambassador for humanity'.

And that praise for the former Albion, Wolves, Villa and Coventry forward's character was a recurring theme from all those who took the time to share memories of him. Among those at the service were Brighton boss Chris Hughton, Regis's nephew Jason Roberts, and ex-England stars Barnes, Carlton Palmer and Viv Anderson.

Albion fan and broadcaster Adrian Chiles, club legend 'Super' Bob Taylor and former Baggies and Wolves striker Don Goodman all attended. Soul star Beverley Knight performed during the service, while Chris Kamara, Les Ferdinand and Dwight Yorke also turned up.

Humility

Barnes heaped praise on Cyrille's personality, saying it even outshone his skills as a striker.

He said: "Cyrille was a fantastic footballer but the greatest quality a human being can have in my opinion is humility – and for someone who was such a great person, he had humility in abundance.

"As much as he was a great footballer, a trail-blazer and a pioneer, his greatest quality was his humility. He was an ambassador for humanity. The way he was as a person far superseded what he was as a footballer – and he was a great footballer."

Big Ron, who managed Regis at Albion and briefly at Villa, said: "From a football point of view, Cyrille would always be the number nine in my best ever team. And as a person he was a great bloke. He was a phenomenal footballer and an even better bloke.

"He didn't go out of his way to fight any crusades but he changed football by being what he was, a role model to everybody. He conducted himself the right way both on and off the field."

CYRILLE REGIS 1958-2018

By David Cosgrove

"He didn't go out of his way to fight any crusades but he changed football by being what he was, a role model to everybody."

Brighton manager Chris Hughton said: "He leaves a lasting legacy because he played in a very difficult era for black players and had a big impact on the lives of those black players who followed him."

Now a Sky Sports presenter, Chris Kamara played in that same era as Cyrille and said the striker had blazed a trail for others to follow. Kamara said: "He was an icon to so many players. What a man, what a legend.

"To withstand abuse in the way that he did and handle it the way that he did shows the measure of the man."

Broadcaster Adrian Chiles said Cyrille became his first hero after he saw him at The Hawthorns back in 1977. Now aged 50, Chiles said: "Cyrille was my first hero and I thought he was indestructible so it makes you realise we are all mortal. He transcended football. There have been so many footballers across the world but very few you can name that transcend the game.

"It's a privilege to have known him."

Bob Taylor, who followed in Cyrille's footsteps as an Albion striker and Hawthorns favourite, said: "From a personal point of view, Cyrille was my coach when I was here, he was a mentor for me – and he was a friend.

"Anybody you speak to will tell you that he was an ambassador on the football pitch and an ambassador off it."

Don Goodman, who – like Regis – represented both Albion and Wolves, added: "Quite simply he was a boyhood hero of mine.

"As I got to know Cyrille through my links with West Bromwich Albion, I came to know what a great

man he was. Not just because he stood up in the face of racism but because he was an all-around good fellow. This man was a superstar of the day, but he was a man of the people. He always had time for people. That is testament to the man – not the footballer."

In a moving eulogy, his nephew Jason Roberts, who also wore the Albion colours, said: "Carrying his coffin with my cousins, uncle and family members, it was the first time it has been hard to be Cyrille Regis's nephew.

"People always wanted to spend time with him, to spend time around his influence. I was so fortunate to have that as a family member.

"The way he interacted with me or my family wasn't necessarily unique. Everybody was inspired by him, that's why I went on to play football.

"It's why my uncle David went on to have a football career, why I wanted to have a career.

"As an individual and a family we don't own the legacy of Cyrille Regis, everybody here does, everybody who's been touched by him, everybody who's been motivated to stay here in the cold and listen to his legacy.

Struggled

"He was a special man and his legacy must live on and through our memories of him."

Dave Regis, Cyrille's younger brother, said: "Like all of us, Cyrille had his ups and downs in life. There was a time after Laurie Cunningham died that he struggled to come to terms with it. He found life difficult, this is when he turned to God seeking some comfort in his life.

"When C met Julia he was back to the brother we knew. He was beaming when he introduced her, it was obvious that she made him happy. His faith brought him peace, he never forced it on anyone.

"We will miss his wisdom, his voice and his life. We will miss you bro, all day long."

Said John Sillett, Coventry City's FA Cup-winning manager: "I had the greatest job in football, managing a man called Cyrille Regis.

"An electric gifted character, he was a bonder of men. After the Cup final he said 'Sill you gave me the proudest day of my life in football' and that was an honour for me.

"The team respected him, they're all here today. They all know what a great man, what a man you could always talk to."

Injured Gavin sees title fight put back

FRANKIE Gavin's IBO Welterweight World title fight with Bethuel Ushona has been pushed back a month after the Birmingham fighter suffered an ankle injury in training. The February 23 fight against the Namibian for the vacant title, at the Genting Arena in Birmingham, has been rescheduled to March 24.

Tickets will be honoured from the original date and the undercard – which features the likes of Josh Stokes and includes two other IBO title fights – is expected to be relatively unaffected.

Gavin's trainer Dean Edwards admitted the injury – sustained during a training camp in Ireland – had been a setback but insisted it was merely a minor one and that Frankie would be fighting fit for the new date. He said: "Frankie has sprained the ligaments in his left ankle and been advised by medics to cease training for seven to ten days. But it's a minor problem.

Gavin said: "I'm gutted but I'll be back. There is no way I'm letting myself or anyone else down."

Selby on cue for an exhibition maximum

WORLD snooker champ Mark Selby racked up a 147 break when he checked in at Stourbridge Snooker Club. The world number one played 10 frames against local players and two raffle winners and knocked in a further three century breaks, including a 132 to kick off the evening.

Local snooker league stalwart Kevin Franklin, who helped organise the event, almost stole the headlines in the final frame of the evening when he lost on the black against the cue-man dubbed 'The Jester from Leicester'.

But while his potting skills drew plenty of plaudits, it was his all-round demeanour that really impressed Franklin. "Mark was a class act, not just on the table but off it as well," added Franklin. "I have been to a lot of these exhibition nights and organised a fair few, but this was the best one by far.

"He had time for everyone and was still there around midnight signing autographs and having pictures taken. Initially he had been due to play eight frames but when he turned up he said he would do a bit of a question and answer session and play a couple extra frames if we wanted."

Fundraising game for club mascot's family

MASCOTS will do battle at Halesowen Town FC for a match in memory of Albion mascot Richard Eades.

Richard, who dressed as Albi Bird, died of a heart attack on Boxing Day, aged 42. Fellow mascot and friend Dave Challenor, who donned the Baggie Bird costume, has organised the match. The mascots' clash will provide the curtain-raiser for match between a West Brom All-Stars team led by former midfielder Andy Johnson and Boing FC, the Albion supporters' team father-of-two Eades used to play for.

Dave is confident mascots from Wolves, Walsall, Birmingham City, Manchester City, Sheffield United, Sheffield Wednesday, Bradford City, Yeovil Town, Hartlepool, and Exeter City will all join in the match.

Hundreds of people have already registered an interest in coming along on April 29, part of a whole day devoted to fundraising for the Eades family. It starts at 11am. It will start with a nine-a-side tournament featuring teams from all aspects of Richard's life.



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Saddlers fans and owner in positive talks

DISCUSSIONS between owner Jeff Bonser and a group of disgruntled Walsall supporters have been revealed following the publication of the meeting's minutes.

Five Saddlers fans met the chairman, chief executive Stefan Gamble and club secretary Daniel Mole last Thursday to discuss a variety of on and off the field issues.

Hundreds of Walsall supporters had been expected to protest during Saturday's game against MK Dons – with many believing Bonser lacks ambition to take the club forward. But that demonstration – which had been backed by the Walsall Supporters' Trust – was cancelled following positive talks.

At the meeting, Bonser revealed the Saddlers turned down several bids for their players in January with a six-figure offer – believed to be for Erhun Oztumer – arriving on deadline day.

The chairman also expressed his desire to reunite the club with the freehold of the Banks's Stadium. The freehold was bought by Bonser via his pension fund which is owned by finance firm Suffolk Life.

Last year Walsall FC paid £440,000 in rent to play at the Banks's. Bonser then withdrew some of that money for his personal pension for the year. But speaking at the meeting, Bonser expressed his desire for the club to acquire the freehold from Suffolk Life's care.

He also believes Walsall Council should look to purchase the freehold – which has a market value of between £5m and £7m – if Saddlers cannot find the funds.

Goal first of many, new recruit vows

NEW recruit Julien Ngoy believes his winning goal against MK Dons will be the first of many in a Walsall shirt.

The Belgian, who was signed at 10.59pm on deadline day, enjoyed a fairytale debut, netting within four minutes of his introduction from the bench in a crucial 1-0 win.

Snapped up on a temporary basis from Stoke, Ngoy scored with practically his first touch – and the striker said he felt proud to score the winner.

"It was a big victory," the 20-year-old said. "I felt the team played very well and I was very pleased and happy to score on my debut. I felt proud."

"The night before and in the morning I was thinking about scoring. I'm sure it won't be the last goal I score for Walsall."

Ngoy is highly rated at Stoke and signed a five-year contract with the Premier League side in September last year.

"I wanted to come out on loan in the window," the forward added. "I wanted to go to a good team where I can express myself and I feel I have got that at Walsall."

Rugby club relief as losing streak ends



Jack Crowhurst scores the winning try

Walsall 15 Newcastle 8

THE Walsall players and management will be relieved after a run of three successive defeats was ended.

The constant rain had made the Delves Road pitch very wet and muddy, and this contributed to a game that involved very few moments of free-flowing rugby.

The testing conditions were evident from the first kick as the hosts knocked on, leading to immediate pressure from the Newcastle pack. The visitors drove forward and were awarded a penalty that full back Gross put over from 25 metres.

Roger Weston was just off target with a penalty as Walsall made slow progress back into the game. However, No8 Hal Gozukucuk did dive over for their first score and Weston converted.

Midway through the second period Weston despatched a 25m penalty, and, inside the last 10 minutes, winger Jack Crowhurst raced down the touchline for a try near the corner flag.

Walsall were on the attack immediately but Newcastle hit back and deserved the losing league point as they covered 80 yards to score a fine try. Only a minute later the referee brought the game to an end and 30 mud-spattered players trudged off the Delves Road pitch.

On Saturday Walsall travel to Whitchurch for a rearranged game against the undefeated league leaders.

Walsall 3rd XV scored four tries through Andy Richardson (2), Tom Thorley and Ben Findon at Birmingham Exiles, but crucially failed to convert any and lost 22-20.

NGOY'S TIMELY INTRODUCTION

JULIEN Ngoy was confirmed a Walsall player at the last minute of the window – at 10.59pm.

And his introduction could not have been more timely as the Belgian netted what could be one of the most important strikes of the Saddlers' season.

The Belgian's wonderful solo effort sank fellow strugglers MK Dons, writes Joe Masi.

Jon Whitney's side entered the game sitting just three points above the bottom four in what was rightly billed as a relegation six-pointer. The Dons, under the guidance of new boss Dan Micciche, occupied the final place in the relegation zone.

Decent

Walsall took control from the off with a clear game plan that saw them press with intensity high up the pitch.

Bizarrely though, the Dons played straight into their hands.

Micciche's side were desperate to play Barcelona-style tika-taka that began with the goalkeeper.

But, quite simply, they weren't good enough to do it. Looking a side destined to be relegated, the Dons gave the ball away cheaply time and time again. But Walsall didn't capitalise despite creating a number of decent opportunities.

Dons held on until half-time, but the Dons proved a threat with Mar-



Julien Ngoy fires home the winner, and, inset, celebrates with Jon Whitney

cus Tavernier, Robbie Muirhead and Kieran Agard all going close from 20 yards.

The turning point came with a planned double substitution from boss Jon Whitney, with Ngoy and Justin Shaibu replacing Erhun Oztumer and Amadou Bakayoko.

And four minutes later Ngoy net-

ted the winner, cutting in off the left flank before calmly finding the bottom corner.

It meant Walsall went on to secure three crucial points relatively comfortably.

But there is another six-pointer just around the corner as Saddlers visit Blackpool on Saturday.

Boxer Louis underdog of the field

LOUIS Fielding reckons he's now the 'genuine underdog' of the four contenders for the Midlands Boxing Series.

The elimination tournament, staged by Errol Johnson's BCB Promotions, begins as planned on Saturday in the Stadium Suite at Walsall Football Club. But there will not be no quarter-final ties after the withdrawals of Kane Baker, Manny Zaber and Josh Baillie, while Jack Summers also no longer features. The winner will be crowned the Midlands super featherweight champion.

The last four bouts will be over six rounds with the final over 10.

Brummie Paul Holt will tackle Chasetown's Luke Jones, while Tamworth's Fielding will take on Derby's Indi Sangha, the only man with an unbeaten pro record.

And 'Flash', aged 27, is determined to become his town's second area champion following Charlie Williams, a fellow Tamworth Boxing Club graduate, who achieved the feat at lightweight last year.

Fielding said: "I'm focused on what I've got to do. I wouldn't be in this tournament if I didn't think I could get through it. I've never been the genuine underdog like this before, there are a few people who don't think I'll beat Indi."

Walsall's Rachel Ball and Coventry's Jordan Cooke also feature in the home corner in other offerings on the Midlands Boxing Series' first fight night.

Tickets are £35 standard and £60 ringside, the latter to include food, on sale now through the boxers on Facebook. Or, call 01922 651 414, extension 416. Entry on the night is £40.

Sporting home in on quarter final spot

WOLVES Sporting CFC have another home tie in the quarter-final of the FA Vase – if they get past Leighton in a rearranged fixture.

Last Saturday's fifth round tie was called off following a 10am inspection by the fourth official. The teams will try again this weekend. Kick off at Pride Park, Great Wyrley is 3pm.

The winner will entertain 1874 Northwich from The Hall Mark Security League Premier Division – Step 5 of the pyramid – on Saturday February 24.

*** The Chronicle, a Midland News Association Ltd publication, printed by the company at Ketterly, Telford. Thursday, February 8, 2018



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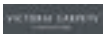


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